

# DIARY OF THE ELEVENTH



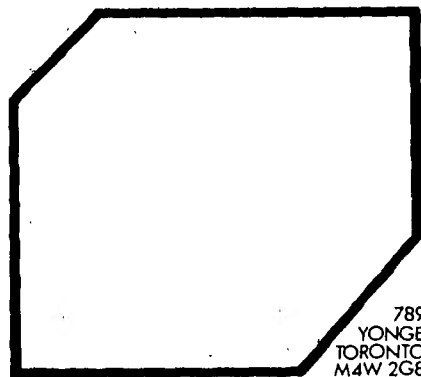
BEING RECORD  
OF THE

## XIth Canadian Field Ambulance

(WESTERN FRONT)

Feb. 1916—May 1919

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To Mr. Fletcher,  
whose letters and scrumptious  
parcels 'over there' helped  
to win the war!

With Love from  
Jack Roe.

Vimy Day.  
April 9<sup>th</sup> 1921

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History

Sept. 1970

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## **Dedication**

TO OUR COMRADES WHOSE MEMORY STILL CONSTRAINS  
US TO ESTEEM THE SIMPLE ACT OF DUTY,  
THIS RECORD IS DEDICATED.

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### ***In Arduis Fidelis***

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LT. COL. H. H. MOSHIER

A. C. BREWER	G. KING
C. BRYAN	J. R. LOCKE
H. CORMICK	C. S. MURRAY
R. T. CAMPBELL	I. C. MALLOUGH
C. R. DIER	F. S. OCCOMORE
J. F. FORSTER	W. R. PRINGLE
S. GRILLS	K. ROSEBORO
J. R. HAMMOND	J. L. SMITH
S. HANSON	C. B. SPENCER
G. W. HEPWORTH	W. S. TURNER
A. J. HIGGS	W. WALLACE
J. G. HILL	E. C. WALTERS
J. N. JARVIS	J. W. WHITTAKER
W. A. JOHNSON	W. R. WRAY



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## EDITORIAL NOTE

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Although the late Colonel H. H. Moshier, arranged primarily that one man from each section of the unit should undertake to collaborate in this record, it was found impossible, owing to the several departures of the writers from the unit, to narrate more than they experienced. It was deemed reasonable then to incorporate into the narrative such data as could be supplied by those who remained with the unit.

This Diary does not profess any literary merit, it does not pretend to be an authentic history of strategy; it aims at nothing more than a simple version of events as seen from the viewpoint of a stretcher-bearer in an Ambulance unit. Written more or less completely to date by the time of the Retreat in March 1918, the work ceased until after the cessation of hostilities. The original editorial staff is mentioned in historical sequence in the narrative.

On the eve of the unit's embarkation for Canada the treasured medley of scrappy manuscripts was forwarded to Ripon where it became the joint burden of A. R. Hall and C. T. Best, who, later, in Winnipeg, with the assistance of J. M. Roe, undertook to complete the narrative and to place it in the printer's hands. This has been facilitated by the assistance of the following members of the unit who have willingly contributed when they were called upon:—E. D. Emery, Rev. F. C. Chapman, H. D. Kitchen, J. Hyslop, J. M. Brown, Dr. C. Kerr.

A. E. JOHNSON,  
A. ROLAND HALL,  
C. T. BEST,  
J. M. ROE.



## PREFACE

To the authors of this small book, we, the original and later members of the 11th Canadian Field Ambulance owe an incalculable debt. They have under great difficulties, and with no little sacrifice, placed before us a lasting memento of the life in the 11th Canadian Field Ambulance as we all saw and felt it, but which we could not record, or, if we could, were not willing to exert ourselves sufficiently to co-ordinate events and record what we felt towards army life, with its enthusiasms, awakenings, heart-burnings, routines, hardships, pleasures, and above all the satisfaction of having accomplished something worth while,—the feeling of satisfaction that should be such an asset in readjusting and establishing ourselves and in overlooking apparent indifference in civil life!

Modesty has prevented the writers from telling of the attitude of the men in the unit towards the real work,—the care and transportation of sick and wounded men. While in my official capacity in the unit I always felt one of the outstanding characteristics of the members was their unflinching and continued solicitude towards the wounded men. Never did this care seem to become mechanical, and I cannot recall a single instance in which the patient did not receive first thought. To this spirit of service amongst the bearers and dressers the unit owes its standard of efficiency and its accomplishments while in France.

The change in viewpoint and the development, particularly in the younger members of the unit, were other striking points brought out during the first year of service in France. One single tour of duty at the Red Chateau produced seasoned men. Trivial things which at first engrossed the attention soon gave way to essentials. Insignificant faults in the individual were soon forgotten when the real unselfish man had made his appearance. Friendships which were to last a lifetime were cemented in a matter of hours or even minutes when in "the thick of it" a common purpose brought men together.

It is hoped that this Diary may help to hold the members of the unit together,—we all have much in common. Though we are now scattered from the Atlantic to the Pacific its pages will recall many incidents both serious and pleasant to our minds.

To the late Lt. Col. H. H. Moshier this publication owes its inception. This Diary was his suggestion, and only by his help in securing time and data was a beginning made possible.

To those who are left behind in France and Belgium our thoughts must often turn, with sadness it is true, but also with pride,—they died on active service. The unselfishness with which their memory is associated is now, more than ever, needed in civil life. We have their messages and must not fail them—

"We throw  
The torch; be yours to hold it high."

J. D. McQUEEN.





# PART I.

## CANADA AND ENGLAND



### CHAPTER I.

#### INCEPTION

In the early days of the Great War, the Canadian Universities were content to have their men go forth as individuals, serving separately in the units of their choice. As time went on, however, and the magnitude of the conflict and the tremendous issues involved began to be more clearly recognized, Universities in Canada, as elsewhere, began to feel that a corporate effort was demanded; that University men should be offered the opportunity of going, not some here and some there,—but rather as battalions. The camaraderie of College life was seen to be a splendid foundation for the blood-brotherhood of War.

When, therefore, in the fall of 1915, a suggestion was made to the four Western Universities that each should recruit a company for the formation of a Western Universities Battalion, the idea was enthusiastically taken up. The mission of Presidents McLean of Manitoba, Murray of Saskatchewan, Tory of Alberta, and Westbrook of British Columbia, to the Militia Headquarters at Ottawa, proved successful and by January of 1916, the Universities Battalion had become an actuality, with many students enrolled.

At the same time a similar idea was being materialized in Winnipeg, by Dr. Halpenny, with a view to securing the enlistment of Medical Students for an Ambulance Corps. This Unit, first known as the Western Universities Overseas Field Ambulance, was to be raised as part of the Fourth Canadian Division, then forming, in England and was officially designated the Eleventh Canadian Field Ambulance.

To Major (as he then was) J. D. McQueen fell the appointment of O. C., but as the major was still with the Third Field Ambulance in France, the initial work of organization was undertaken by Capt. C. E. Fortin, recently returned from medical work at the front with the Strathcona Horse.

Meanwhile, in Edmonton at the beginning of March, the second in command, Major H. H. Moshier, Professor of Physiology in the University of Alberta, quickly secured his quota of recruits. Of the thirty-two students enlisted at Alberta, sixteen were medical students from that University, and six theological students from Robertson College. These men really formed the nucleus of the new unit, for they were the first to experience army discipline.

The change from book-grinding to daily morning physical training and long afternoon route marches was fairly sharp, but under the capable direction of Sgt. Hammond, excellent progress was made. Lectures and practical demonstrations by Major Moshier also formed part of the training. After the first week Barrack life began in Assiniboia Hall where the Albertans experienced the hardship of sleeping on the floor! This, thought they, was soldiering with a vengeance.

A week later, on March 20th, came the marching orders to the Manitoba capital. Arrived at Winnipeg the company was conducted by Capt. Fortin to the palatial barracks of the Manitoba Agricultural College, where they found themselves to be

among the first arrivals of the Unit, Albertans no longer, but men of the Eleventh Canadian Field Ambulance.

This in brief is the history of the Unit's inception. The story proper really begins with those few, strenuous weeks of training at the M. A. C.

## CHAPTER II.

### AT THE M.A.C.

Once in permanent barracks at the Manitoba Agricultural College, the strength of the unit began rapidly to increase. Men arrived daily from the city or further afield from Saskatchewan and British Columbia. In addition to the Alberta men already mentioned, there were medical men from Manitoba, Arts men from that University and from Saskatchewan, students of St. John's, Winnipeg and Emmanuel, Saskatoon, from Toba, from Wesley, and from Brandon.

Very interesting was it to observe, say, the immaculate sophomore in well-tailored "civvies," or the parson in his sober habit, descend to the basement of the chemistry building and emerge some half hour later with a huge armful of khaki; cart this to his room and there, divesting himself of collar and cuffs, necktie and pin, become a soldier at least as to the clothes.

There were those first attempts with non-spiral puttees. Was there any dodge in putting them on? One went frantically from room to room for guidance, only to see a raw recruit with puttees all agape. And then, when at length the khaki roll had been somehow swathed round one's spindles, there was that ever-present fear as to whether the wretched things would keep up. The sacredness of that word "issue" early began to be understood; nevertheless, many were the pairs of issue pants that were handed to Mr. Isaacstein the tailor, to be converted into breeches. The beetle crushers (issue boots, i.e.) were for the most part given the go-by. It really was asking too much of a fellow to appear in these unshinable clod-hoppers, when a decent pair of tan shoes could be procured in town for a mere six dollars!

The luxury of life at the M.A.C. was to become a proverb in the later days of Flanders mud. "Gee, boys, only to be back at the old M.A.C.," some fed-up one would remark. "Yes, just to get under those hot showers again, or to drop into the plunge." "Do you remember the waitresses?" "Do I! and say, wouldn't some macaroni and cheese go down swell now?" "Don't forget the private apartments, with two to a room and real beds—Heavens, and to think we used to grouse about it!" And indeed life at the M.A.C. was very pleasant. Although at first parades were held and drill performed on the snow-covered ground, Spring soon began to assert itself, so that football and baseball and even tennis became possible. Some good games of football and basketball were played with "A." Company of the 196th Battalion, who occupied the same barracks.

The routine at this time was not light. Daily orders for April 25th, No. 47 run as follows:—

- 6.00 A.M., Reveille.
- 6.15 A.M., Roll Call and run.
- 7.30 A.M., Breakfast.
- 8.30 A.M., Physical training.
- 9.15 A.M., Squad Drill.
- 10.30 A.M., Stretcher Drill.
- 12.00 Noon, Dinner.
- 2.00 P.M., Demonstration in First Aid and Bandaging.
- 3.00 P.M., Rifle Drill or lecture.
- 4.00 P.M., Company Drill.
- 6.00 P.M., Supper.

The physical training invariably took place in the big gymnasium and it must be said that Sgt. Major Jevons made it anything but tedious and uninteresting. His vigorous remarks to the effect that he did not want any of that "half lady sort of stuff," nor, in the arms upward stretched, "any cow horns," and his whacking of a too prominent clerical posterior in the "on the hands down" exercise, caused one often literally to collapse with laughter.

The presence of rifle drill on the Orders quoted is explained by the fact that guard duty had to be undertaken by the ambulance men. Those to whom the duty fell

will probably never forget the chance occasion on which the passing of a Major or higher rank, devolved on them the terrifying experience of "presenting arms."

In respect of medical instruction also, a good deal was accomplished. Lectures in anatomy, sanitation, disease, etc., were given almost daily by the officers, while first aid and stretcher drill took place in the Gym. So that when, on April 25th, Col. McQueen arrived, he was able to express himself as well pleased with the progress which had been made.

Hereabouts the Unit experienced its first taste of being confined to barracks. This inconvenience, which prevented the customary evening trips to town by car, was due to the trouble amongst the troops in Winnipeg. Fortunately the confinement only lasted two days, but during that time the roll was called at frequent intervals after parade hours, a circumstance which proved a nuisance alike to N. C. O.s and men.

Speaking of vexations, mention must be made of the kit inspections (and what a lot of truck one had in those days), and the muster parades, where the stern order of the adjutant—"On your name being called you will answer 'Here Sir,' double round to me, salute, give your name and number, salute and fall in on my left, your right."—made one tremble with nervous apprehension, lest he should salute with the wrong hand, fall in on the wrong side of the despotic adjutant, forget his number, or, much less important, his name. There was the dilemma too, on those muster parades, as to how, at the adjutant's favorite command: "Men, Shun," one could spring to a position that he was already in!

It is interesting to recall that several men of the Unit still continued their studies and were granted leave to write their examinations in April. Scholarships to the amount \$630.00 were carried off by men of the University of Manitoba in the Unit. The ranks also contained the Saskatchewan Rhodes Scholar for 1918, and no less than ten fully ordained ministers representing almost every province of the Dominion and including a Canon. Good Corporal Downer, (clerk in Holy Orders, and Bachelor of Arts) on arrival looked positively patriarchal. That fine chin crop was soon, alas, to be offered up on the altar of Mars, but it is said that some of the whiskers found their way back to Saskatoon where the beard had been one of the sights of the city. A fellow traveller with the men from Saskatoon averred positively that he had taken Downer to be the father of A. E. Johnson. He had supposed the old man was seeing the boy off!

Mention would be made of the occasional amusing interludes supplied by the vagaries of the Agricultural College goat, which (not, we suspect, without military assistance), used to find its way at inconvenient hours into sleeping quarters. Nanny displayed a special partiality for bursting in suddenly on the privacy of Reinhorn, when that versatile warrior was engaged in discussing with a few friends, every subject under heaven, from the Cabbala, to La Vie Militaire.

The routine inseparable from training was delightfully relieved by the holding of three excellent concerts in the auditorium of the college, which hall, together with the reading room containing a grand piano, was graciously placed at the Unit's disposal by President Reynolds. The first concert was the joint product of the 196th and the Field Ambulance; the second was given by the ladies of the college, while the third was entirely by the Eleventh's own talent. On each occasion the auditorium was crowded, special cars being chartered for the folk from town, friends and sweet-hearts; so that the scene around the car terminus was one of gaiety and delight.

How often in later days, was one wont to compare these artistic productions with the notorious, pianoless exhibitions in a dimly lighted, ill-warmed hut at the desolate Front.

Of much less blessed memory than the concerts, were the two inoculations against Typhoid which took place at the beginning of May. By way of variation a vaccination was sandwiched between them! In consequence of these abhorred operations, from the effect of which every man felt extremely cheap, the routine of training greatly slackened. It was as much as a man could do to carry out his ordinary fatigues especially when that fatigue consisted of scrubbing out his room.

One fine day the disgusting order went forth that these rooms, with their cosy beds, had to be evacuated. Mattresses and blankets were carried down to the gymnasium which was now turned into a huge dormitory. It was indeed a grievous thing to undergo at that time—sleeping on a mattress on the floor! Whether this time was the date when some of the "camouflaged civilians" began to agree with Sherman's definition of War, is not on record.

On May 8th, the Unit was photographed and on the same day orders were given that all civilian clothing had to be disposed of by 10.00 A.M. of Tuesday, 9th. Obviously this "meant something." Then, on May 11th, a medical inspection took place in the plunge room, each man appearing nude before a knot of officers who were thus satisfied that the manhood of the Unit contained no defectives. On that day also kit bags were ordered to be "distinctly and neatly marked either with black paint or India ink, parallel with the seams by 9.00 A.M. Friday, 12th." The most dense could not fail to divine the significance of that, and the only question was, "Sewell or Over-sens?" Sgt. Major Jevons made the decision contingent on the Unit's soldierliness. He hung "Sewell" over its head like a veritable sword of Damocles, and it is certain that more ambitious endeavors in the direction of Military efficiency were never made at any subsequent time. Even Canon Murray began to form fours with the snap of a Prussian Guardsman.

At length-various indications served to show that even the S.M. had now been robbed of the power of sending the Unit to Sewell, and the glorious fact stood out that the Eleventh was booked for overseas! A full muster parade was held May 13th, and then permission was granted the men to visit in town until 4 P.M. on Sunday 14th, at which time every one was required to be ready to move off in full marching order.

A very pleasant feature marked the time prior to the actual departure from the college. While waiting for the "fall in" to sound, a few men had assembled in the reading room and were singing some old favorite hymns. The company of songsters began to increase until a good percentage of the Unit had come together at the informal song service. The fact that the day was the Sabbath and that the men were that night to commence their long journey seemed to imbue this service with marked appropriateness, and when the S.M. suggested that Canon Murray (more strictly speaking, Corp. Murray) should offer prayer, the idea seemed to be eminently fitting. The happiness of this spontaneous service was often referred to by men who did not profess any particular religious beliefs.

About 7. 30 P.M., three special street cars whizzed up to the college; into these the men piled with equipment sufficient for a north pole trip. A guard of honor was formed by men of the 196th, who did not allow their envy to temper the ringing cheers with which they sped the Eleventh on its way.

At the C. P. R. Station an enormous crowd had gathered and when the friends and relatives of the departing men were allowed through the barriers, the platform was alive with animation. Impossible to do justice to that scene. At the windows of the train crowded the men, some hanging half way out, other less fortunate ones getting in final conversations over comrades' shoulders. To each his group of friends. There were mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, sweethearts. Those whose homes were not in Winnipeg were far from being friendless. They, indeed, had perhaps the gayest time of all, being fêted by the ladies, from whom many a parting kiss was plundered—no, not plundered, for they were given freely, those kisses to the soldier boy off to the front. Poor Bodle let slip the disconsolate remark, that he had no one to kiss him goodbye. "You poor boy," quickly responded a warm-hearted lass in the crowd, "I'll kiss you goodbye." There are times when it pays to be friendless.

The scores of packets of chocolates and other good things which went in at the windows would have stocked a decent candy store for a month. There was a marvellous cheerfulness in the air, and any pangs at parting were somewhat robbed of their poignancy by the fact that the train, as if impatient at standing still, went forward the length of the platform only to shunt back on the other side. The farewell embraces for which the men caught up their loved ones to the windows, was a subject for the artist's brush, so also the sight of relatives and friends waving their final farewells, a scene which, as the train made off into the night, faded like the slow dissolving of a living picture.

The good parcels of tuck were soon attacked and provided everybody with a splendid lunch. One packet from the St. John's girls contained the following delightful caution,

"When you're the English girls' pets,  
Don't forget the St. John's freshettes."

What a prospect it was! How gay the heart of every man as he realized that he was due to cross the sea, to England, to France! For most it was the greatest adventure ever; tremendous, glorious, intoxicating. Why, many of us from the West

had never even seen the sea, not to speak of historical England and the romantic land of France.

The journey to Halifax was long and not particularly enjoyable, for poor weather prevailed during most of the five days, obscuring the varied scenery. The colonist car bunks proved pretty hard beds, but there were no genuine causes of complaint, the food being plentiful and nourishing if much less daintily served than at the grand hotel M.A.C. Reading, card tournaments, or sometimes a friendly rag, served to fleet the time, while in pleasant conversations the foundations of friendships were formed and interesting characters encountered. Full advantage was taken of every stoppage to greet the good people at the particular depot and a pretty girl became the cynosure of all eyes. Already one felt that the gentler aspects of life were receding into the past, so that when some gracious maiden "came through" with a kiss, the lucky boy, envied by his comrades, considered himself fortunate.

At North Bay and Moncton time was allowed for short route marches and these leg-stretchings were never so much appreciated. At other points permission was given to detain and several times "physical jerks" were performed in the depot itself, much to the entertainment of the local inhabitants.

Sensation was caused aboard the train when on the fifth night many rumors filled the air of escaped prisoners and of spies bent on train wrecking. Sentries were placed at every entrance to the train and in the neighborhood of Truro the track was guarded at every few yards. At Truro itself an inspection of every man's kit was made by the officers. In the search for explosives all packs, and those tightly stuffed kit bags, had to be emptied, while officers flashed their torches into every nook and corner of the train for the deadly time-bombs. Poor Reinhorn who, at the last stopping place, had sent back the most innocent of telegrams, was placed under arrest as a suspected spy.

The time was very exciting; the prospect of being "napooed" through a train wreck before one had even got out of Canada, was not a pleasant one. However, the bunks were made and sleep obtained as usual that night, and in the morning, all bombs having either been swept from the track or caught up in the cow-catcher, the train stood safely in Halifax Station. That afternoon the Unit went on board the S.S. Adriatic.

Contrary to hopes and reports the ambulance men were not given first or even second class cabins. The 86th. Machine Gun Battalion from Hamilton, the 224th. Foresters, the 8th Stationary Hospital from Saskatchewan and a few Army Service corps men came upon that huge wharf and embarked upon the same boat.

Three nights were spent aboard ship in harbour during which time Dame Rumour was very busy spreading reports of spies among the troops. It was affirmed that at least two men were removed from the boat. Betting in New York was said to be one hundred to one against the convoy's getting safely across. At Hamilton meanwhile news had been received that the Adriatic had been blown up in harbor and that all the 86th had perished, while hordes of German-Americans were said to be invading Canada from the south.

On the morning of May 22nd shortly after breakfast, the big ship began to turn and head for the Sea. There was a rush of men to the deck, and as the fact was realized that the vessel was under way, feelings of excitement found vent in vigorous cheering and waving towards the shore. The day was superb, and the view of the cruiser 'Drake' steaming ahead in the sun-drenched morning mist, piloting the convoy down the fairway, was a sight glorious and memorable.

With the "Adriatic" sailed her sister ship, the "Baltic" and the grimy-looking "Empress of Britain," each vessel crammed with troops. The "Baltic" followed the "Drake" and the "Empress" ploughed her way in the wake of our own "Adriatic." Life on board the latter boat was far from unpleasant. The pond was never really rough and the weather permitted deck life throughout the voyage. P. T. and life-boat drill constituted the routine duties and, in addition, the running of the hospital fell to the Field Ambulance.

The submarine danger was never quite forgotten and no lights were shown through the night. Each morning eyes were strained ahead for a sight of the onleaching cruiser, whose presence was not a little comforting. The black outline of the "Baltic" ahead was never lost sight of, while in the rear one sought the "Empress," and when she could not be seen, the more imaginative entertained apprehensions for her safety. The life-boat signal was to be the sounding of five short whistle blasts, on hearing which, every one had to secure his lifebelt and fall in by the allotted life-boat. This drill was

frequently practised but only once did the five blasts sound out, when the alarm fortunately was a false one.

On the one Sunday spent at sea, church parades were held on deck in the bow. At the parade attended by the Ambulance, the sermon was delivered by Corp. (Canon) Murray.

On the seventh day at Sea the vessels, nearing the danger zone, began to take a zig-zag course; at the same time lifebelts were ordered to be worn. Towards evening as the sun went down in the west, attention of all on deck was drawn to heliographic flashings on the eastern horizon. Conjectures as to what these might mean were not long left unsatisfied; for in less than ten minutes three destroyers had taken up their positions across the respective bows of the three troop ships. The coming of these protectors seemed like a hand thrust out from the mother country to welcome her sons, and while those heliographic messages were untranslatable by the landlubber, there was no one on board who did not read in them an urgent message of gratitude and assurance from the old world.

The following morning dawned magnificent, and the early riser was rewarded by a purple view of Ireland to the south. The ships meanwhile had put on full steam and, as if human, were literally bounding into port. The Irish sea was calm and beautiful as a lake. A distant view of Scotland was caught, then the coast of England itself, and almost immediately, as it seemed, the greyhound had slowed up in the roadstead of the Mersey.

Meanwhile the old "Empress" whom everybody had supposed the slowest craft of the three now put forth her strength and easily made port first, while Mistress Baltic, who had hitherto held the lead, was soon lost to view astern.

Good British cheers greeted the Canadians at New Brighton, and the salvoes returned from the "Adriatic" were no less hearty. The impatience to disembark was as great as it ever is, but another night had to be passed on board before the lads from the West set foot on the soil of Mother England.

### CHAPTER III.

#### ENGLAND

On the morning of May 30th, the Unit disembarked from the "Adriatic" and was soon entrained in those toy English coaches with their ridiculous little engines. The day was glorious and the journey south afforded a feast of beauty. The hedgerows, ablaze with the full-blown hawthorn; the rich verdure of the pastures and the grandeur of the English woodlands proved a revelation to the Canadian-born. Remarkable one lad, "The man who leaves England is a fool, and he who wouldn't fight for her ought to be shot." Another man described the country as one huge park. Even to the English-born boy the Motherland on that perfect May day seemed to be abiding under a great blessing; the very home of beauty.

The pleasant village of Fleet in Hampshire was reached towards evening and from this place the Unit set out for Twizezdown, three miles off. Being the first Canadians to come to the district, the Ambulance men received very warm, if undemonstrative, welcome from the good village folk, while the few Imperial soldiers around were glad to relieve some of their Canadian comrades of their heavy kit bags.

The Camp at Twizezdown proved to be an excellent one in every respect. Coffee and cake were served out to the tired newcomers and were most acceptable. Friendships between the Imperial medical men and those from across the water were struck up almost at once. The former, some of whom had already taken part in the Eastern campaign, gave entertaining accounts of their experiences at Salonika and the Dardanelles, relieving them with exhibitions of Egyptian dances, song numbers and popular choruses. One old Lancashire lad in particular will always be remembered for his inimitable presentation of a North Countryman at a final tie football match. It was he, too, who rendered those excruciatingly funny-songs, "But I want you to notice my puttees" and "What a funny little place to 'ave one." These would be given in the huts towards "lights out" and the performer, merry from sipping and song, would withdraw with the remark, "No offence, gentlemen; no offence; all in good order Corporal; no offence, gentlemen, no offence."

At Twizezdown regular training was at once imposed, but on looking back, the training seems incidental when compared with visits to surrounding towns such as Farnham and Aldershot, not to mention the village of Fleet itself where the more amor-

ous quickly acquired sweethearts to be taken out on the canal. During the week-end spent here some of the boys whose homes were near were lucky enough to secure leave. A hut full of less fortunate ones was isolated and C.B.'d for measles.

On the 13th of June a march of 14 miles through magnificent country, brought the company by afternoon to the famous Bramshott Camp, to a world of Canadian soldiers. An advanced party had pitched tents hard-by the Seven Thorns Inn, but these had for the most part to be struck and pitched again; and as the day turned very bleak and the men were tired and hungry, the impression that Bramshott made was anything but favorable, especially when compared with Twezeldown.

However, any thought of discontent was frustrated, as always, by an abundance of work to be done. Almost immediately the sections took over hospital duties, A. dealing with the sick of the 10th Brigade of the 4th Division; B. with those of the 11th Brigade, and C. those of the 12th Brigade. The first of these hospitals was situated near the Bramshott Military Hospital, but those run by B. and C. had a more central position in the huge camp. Though no serious cases were dealt with in the brigade hospitals (any such patients being sent to the B.M.H.) invaluable experience was gained at this time by the Ambulance men in the routine duties of a hospital. The theoretical training already acquired was now for the first time put into practice. The use and care of instruments, the manipulation of panniers and the mysteries of inoculation were thoroughly inculcated by the Officers, who in addition conducted most helpful daily clinics in the wards.

The running of night and day shifts, which at a later date in France was to become such a matter of course, was now commenced; so also the system of clerking, a more important phase of the war than the civilian would probably realize. In addition there were of course the usual quota of fatigues—the scrubbing of floors, sweeping, cooking and other jobs even less pleasant.

The Tent Section, as the hospital workers were called, were not, however, the only busy ones, for at camp vigorous training was scheduled daily. This however was excellently varied and the fact that the time was summer, in England, rendered the full days less laborious and life anything but dull or monotonous. Who could complain for instance, of an afternoon spent on the rim of the Devil's Punch Bowl beyond Hindhead, vaguely conscious that nearby some doctor was (most incongruously) lecturing on the subject of disease! Sometimes at the same place, or some other equally charming spot in that locality, where the beauty of Surrey and Hampshire seemed to vie at the meeting of the counties, the afternoon would be spent in the construction of bivouacs out of ground sheets, bootlaces and sticks. This training, when combined with the gentle art of appropriating, was to stand in good stead in the billetless regions of old battlegrounds.

Afternoon route marches in full marching-order proved much less popular than the training just mentioned. With the thick winter underwear worn at this time, the sweltering heat, those unholy puttees and army boots, not to mention the leather equipment which tourniquet'd the neck and arms, the dust-covered route marcher, on taking off the leaden pack, often found himself to be well-nigh "all in."

The morning training was fairly strenuous and included a run at Reveille; 5.30. Sgt. Brown gained a certain notoriety for the pace he set in these ante-prandial jaunts up the Portsmouth Road, so that to the tune of John Brown's Body the lines were sung:—"Brown's little morning run is guaranteed to kill."

At times, physical jerks were substituted for the run and of course a full share of P.T. came after breakfast. Stretcher drill was a constant item, and when to the somewhat futile drill itself was added the collection of patients, a certain romantic, not to say amusing, element was thus introduced. On the command "Collect wounded" the bearers raced with warwhooping enthusiasm toward the casualties, not, it is to be feared, spurred on by any heroic sense of duty, but in order to commandeer for their stretcher the lightest patient of the lot, and to avoid such tons of flesh as Garrioch, Buck, Mitchell or Bob Hewson! The solemn mathematical process of loading stretcher cases into ambulances also formed part of the drill, but it is hoped, nay it is a fact, that in France the Ambulance men invested this all too frequent ceremony with a little less of the funeral spirit. Why, those Bramshott ambulances might have been hearses and the bearers so many undertakers.

Time was found on the schedule for a good deal of company drill, and even more of the abominated squad drill. It is a moot point whether at this time we performed oftener the intricate manoeuvre of forming fours, or the even brainier action of picking up or changing stretchers. Later on came the practice of loading wagons, when

occasions were afforded for the majority to engineer a huge bluff of busyness, by the spasmodic removal of a pannier from here to there, and then, after the necessary rest upon the said pannier, replacing it from there to here.

Demonstrations in bandaging completed the regime, but as these were usually conducted in some cool dell in the pleasant shade of a tree, this form of training was anything but irksome, especially if one had acquired the useful art of sleeping with the eyes open. A reply to Capt. MacKinnon's question on one of these occasions as to the causes of unconsciousness is worth recording. Answered Bobby Cameron from behind a tree, "Squad drill, Sir."

The granting of four days leave to every man at this time gave untold delight. London was, of course, the popular resort, and many of the men experienced its attractions for the first time. The Capital was universally pronounced to be "Some Burg" and it was fascinating to listen to many a tale of those four days as told in the tent by some enthusiast recently returned from "doing" the great city. The luxury of sleeping in a Christian bed again instead of on the ground was always pleasantly dwelt upon. "Geel fellows," remarked one man referring to his hotel bed, "I just peeled right off and sank down in the pillows with only my disc on." The beauty of the London girls came in for a good measure of praise, but a comparison was made between their footwear and that of Canadiennes, to the decided credit of the latter.

Training continued to be as vigorous as ever and to it was now added the unpleasant feature of gas drill. The P.H. helmet was then the only mask and from its use for any length of time, one became almost nauseated by the taste and smell of the gas antidote. It was then that gratitude was felt for the canteen which had been established in camp by the Junior Army and Navy Stores, where a good draught of ginger beer, kaola or squash restored the appetite for dinner.

Looking back, the feeding at Bramshott must be pronounced good. Mess tins now came into regular use and were subject to those thrice daily plunges into pails for cleansing. The last comer often had to debate whether his utensils would come out cleaner or dirtier from immersion in the water, which, to him looked more like thick soup. As time went on, especially in France, a man grew less fastidious on this point as well as on many other things, and congratulated himself if a piece of newspaper were at hand with which to wipe round the top of the tin; the bottom, having only contained tea, was considered thereby to be sufficiently scoured. The luxury of a mess tin was scarcely appreciated, for the days of dining off the floor had not then begun. The slapping on to each table of a piece of margarine into which each man cut, was a sorry descent from the days of artistic butter rolls in butter dishes at the M.A.C.

One consoling factor in the Bramshott mess, however, was the regular appearance at each meal of the Orderly Officer. His earnest desire of hearing and remedying "any complaint" was usually given full scope. One recalls Bobby Cameron pitifully presenting the middle of his mess tin, discolored with a little blob of marmalade, to the O.O. and inquiring, "Look, Sir, is this a man's issue?" Rank margarine was never allowed to pass without complaint. An Orderly Officer on one occasion actually undertook to taste the censured article, with the result that the mess witnessed a screwed-up countenance and faintly heard the voluminous expression—"Oh, hell."

The cooks, poor beggars, came in for a good measure of disapprobation. It was said that they could not even boil water without burning it, and one man, entering the marquee with a thimble full of soup in his mess tin, announced that they were serving out the gol-darn stuff with a fountain-pen filler! Rice was a frequent dish for tea and called forth the remark that any one would have thought that we were a bunch of sanguinary Chinks.

Such fastidiousness only served to emphasize the fact that the men were still camouflaged civilians. Sgt. Major Jevons was right; they had yet to begin soldiering.

The work of the Y.M.C.A. now began to be appreciated. Some glorious strawberry teas were enjoyed by many of the boys; and no less welcome were the hut concerts which followed these camp repasts. But a more popular evening resort was the Backwoods Club, charmingly situated on the heath and shielded from the road by sweet-smelling pine trees. This retreat, avoiding as it did the canteen atmosphere of the overcrowded hut, proved a source of no little pleasure to the boy from the West. Excellent refreshments, a piano, and tents used for reading, writing and lecturing, were some of the features at the Backwoods. There were concerts, frequent and good, lectures in French and talks in the open on subjects delightful and varied. Very pleasant it was to the march-weary lad to be able to command a good deck chair outside the



marquee, and there, with the sun tingeing the pine trees and silvering the outfield hard by, to write a letter home, or peruse the latest illustrated papers, or even (whisper it low) hold converse with a lady. In connection with the Backwoods was a choice little lending library in the lodge of Chasemoor. If other units in the Fourth Division used this source of good reading as much as the Eleventh, its establishment was indeed justified.

A favorite resort of the men on Saturday and Sunday afternoons was the home of Lord Tennyson at Aldworth beyond Haslemere. With a certain quiet fervor did Canadians sit in the great laureate's chair and look out of the window over the landscape whence inspiration had been wont to be sought, reverencing the while a great soul's memory. The rich beauty of that scene seemed to have been deepened by Tennyson's presence and by the tribute paid it in his immortal verse.

Training at camp meanwhile became increasingly interesting as it approximated more to the work of active service. Detachments of bearers under the officers would start off early to Ludshott Common there to establish Regimental Aid Posts and Advanced Dressing Stations while "patients" were located in the trenches. These latter were in due course collected by the bearers, given first aid treatment, then borne back to the R.A.P., (where wounds were redressed) and again on to the A.D.S. Some of the casualties were "cases" indeed. One man, suffering from a broken arm, but comfortably embedded in the heather and smoking, was told by the stretcher bearers that he could walk. "Walk be d—d", quoth he, "Why, I'm unconscious!"

These operations were carried out on a grander scale in connection with the Brigade manoeuvres, and clearances were made by motor ambulance right back to the Main Dressing Station at camp, where B. section were receiving. On this occasion a diversion was afforded by the clever acting of one of the patients supposed to be shell-shocked. Weir surely behaved in about as crazy a manner as could be imagined, even carrying his nonsense to the extent of treating General Jones with a certain idiotic contempt. The attempt of the officers to get this patient to laugh proved futile, and finally Weir endeavored to enter the Staff Car much to the General's amusement.

An inspection of the 4th Division by His Majesty the King having been scheduled for July 1st, a rehearsal of the march past was held a few days previously. This necessitated a route march with full equipment to Hankley Common, some six or seven miles distant from the camp. A haversack lunch (consisting of one meat and one large jam sandwich) was consumed on the ground and in the early afternoon the journey was begun back to camp. Then it was that one failed to appreciate that long, long hill, as steep as long, mounting up to the village of Hindhead. With what pleasure, half way up, one could have "ditched" his pack, or even the stifling bandolier formed of the great-coat. Does that English clergyman remember (for sure he must) the remark of one perspiring man, as he jerked up the leaden pack on his back—"Did you ever read 'Pilgrim's Progress,' Sir?"—the reference being of course to Christian's burden.

The actual inspection on July 1st, by the King was a memorable event. A happier celebration of Dominion Day under the circumstances would have been difficult to conceive. The Field Ambulances, being at the rear of the march past, had a good view of the waves of infantrymen swinging past His Majesty to the rhythm of the music of the band and to the flashings of a myriad of bayonets, like the play of sunlight on the ruffled bosom of a lake. Nor will the rattling noise of line after line of artillery as they turned from the straight of the march past and raced down the slope to their positions, be readily forgotten. Before the march past, His Majesty, who was accompanied by Lord French, rode round the various lines, thereby enabling every man to get a good view of his person. The review closed with ringing cheers for the King, who later expressed the pleasure and satisfaction the day had afforded him.

The night route march on July 11th, provided a novel if unwelcome item in the training. Grave orders were issued that no lights were to be shown except a white one carried fifty yards in advance and a red light carried fifty yards in the rear, and that there was to be no smoking and no unnecessary talking. So that the march seemed more like a solemn procession. Down through the valley, where runs the brook immortalized by Tennyson, went the Company, along the sweet, hawthorn-guarded lanes, under canopies of trees, on to the village of Liphook. Here the turn was made homeward past the reputed chestnut tree where stood the Village Blacksmith, past the inn where Nelson spent the night en route for Portsmouth. Avoiding the main road the Company lost itself again in the lanes, till a halt was called by a church, recognized as that of Bramshott. From there to camp was but a mile or so up the Ports-

mouth Road. It was in the small hours of the morning that the company dismissed and each man, seeking his earth space in the tent, coiled into the blankets. Reveille that morning was as usual, 5.30, which in view of the late retirement was more than ever unwelcome.

To the strength of the Unit, which had already been increased by the 4th Sanitary Section, were now added on July 21st, the men of the A.S.C. With them came the horses, also certain four footed conscripts called mules. These unlovely, long eared brutes (whom the A.S.C. men early began to call by the affectionate title which reminded the creatures of their doubtful parentage) were secured from Aldershot, and the story of their home bringing could be presented as a veritable Jungle Tale. To appreciate the finer details however, one should be seated in the farrier's hut listening to good Corp. Watson telling the story of that memorable journey.

Quite early in the morning the assignment of beasts was made. Each "mule-skinner" had two mules, the one to be ridden and the other led. Duty Sgt. Prior sang out the familiar order, "Prepare to mount—mount." At once the creatures took up a resistant attitude and the sequel may be briefly told by stating that some two or three hours were spent in a rounding up process. Eventually the "walk march" began, though the rate and manner of the parade was decidedly not in the hands of the Sergeant, but the feet of the mules. A halt was made at a stream for water, the animals were led in by pairs, and in some cases the led mule, his thirst satisfied, decided to carry on with the march, while the ridden mule, not liking the water at his feet, was anxious to get across. A picture of the dilemma may be readily called up. One man, deciding that it were better to hold on to the led mule, neatly landed in the stream, while the saddled beast, with diabolical obtuseness, wheeled round and made for the opposite bank. One man, two mules and a stream: man in stream, one mule loose on one bank, other mule loose on other bank: air thick!

As if-auguring the future, the transport now for the first time got lost, travelling many miles in order to compass the short distance. In the later afternoon an innkeeper invited the weary company to turn in for a drink. Such generous hospitality could not be refused, mules or no mules, but no little chagrin was experienced when, in addition to the loss of a mule or two, the good host presented a long bill for the drinks. Eventually camp was reached at about nine o'clock at night, the journey of six or seven miles having taken since six in the morning.

These same mules, whose taming provided daily entertainment, were roundly cursed by the men on the occasion of the calling in of palliasses, the straw it was said, being needed for the mules. However, a day or so later all that good bedding went up in smoke and it was explained that the men had to get used to roughing it. In this circumstance the wiser rightly divined an indication of an early departure for France. The coming of seven Cadillac motor ambulances and three motor cycles, which arrived by convoy from Folkestone, gave further credence to the rumor that the time for real active service was not far distant.

Towards the end of July each of the three sections conducted Field Ambulance Manoeuvres on Headley Common. These operations included the establishment of Regimental Aid Posts, the collection of wounded from the trenches, the carrying of them from the lines and the loading of the horse ambulances. A night was spent on the Common under bivouacs which the men constructed with ground sheets.

At camp the Horse Transport now came in for almost daily marches with the wagons and limbers, and under this exercising the mules became appreciably less refractory.

An inoculation for typhoid on August 1st rendered everyone more or less hors de combat and in consequence training had to be suspended. On August 7th Hankley Common again witnessed a review of the Fourth Canadian Division, this time by Mr. Lloyd George, then newly appointed War Minister, and by General Sir Sam Hughes. On the following day General Jones visited the lines of the Eleventh Canadian Field Ambulance and orders were definitely received for overseas. The morrow saw all the tents struck, ditches filled in, equipment packed, flower beds despoiled and the artistic borders, through the camp demolished.

That night the men slept in the open with the prospect of reveille in the morning, or rather in the night, at 3 A.M. But all discomfort was swallowed up in the excitement, in the pleasurable anticipation of France, the prospect of which was relished with a keenness only a little less sharp than that with which, later, amid the mud, the lice and the general hell of the Front, one was to pine for dear old Blighty.

Duly at 3 A.M. on the morning of Aug. 10th, the reveille sounded. A roll call

was made by flash lamp, (in one section by match light) and at 3.30 the men stumbled to the cookhouse for a meal. An hour later the Unit had moved off, forming yet another detachment of the men who marched away, "Ere the barn-cocks say, night is growing old." The dawn came slowly and peacefully during the march. Only a solitary laborer, met here and there, his corduroys strapped at the knees and his tea can swinging with his arm, disproved the impression that all the world slept. On the outskirts of one village a Gypsy encampment had begun to stir, blue smoke from the caravan uprising straight against the trees. Occasionally a hand (doubtless of some fair one in *deshabille*) was thrust through a bedroom window to wave farewell to the men whose trampings had disturbed slumber.

At Bordon the Unit entrained for Southampton. In the sheds of the dock yards a meal of bully was seized and a welcome cup of coffee at a canteen, and then in the early afternoon the 11th, together with the 46th Battalion and a company of Engineers boarded the "Princess Clementine." Each man soon sought his berth, that is to say, any square foot where he could unburden himself of his equipment and sit down upon it. As night came on, men everywhere stretched out to sleep—below deck with the throbbing engines, at the foot of the stairs, anywhere, everywhere, men, men. On deck, literally, one could not walk for sleeping khaki forms pillowed on equipment. It was about one o'clock when port LeHavre was reached, but the tremendous event was only signalized by a comrade here and there rising up from a doze to say sleepily "We're there."

Yes, we were There—France, and what was it all going to mean?  
At daybreak the work of disembarkation began.

## PART II.

### YPRES AND THE SOMME



#### CHAPTER I.

##### FRANCE

Not an Officer, non-commissioned officer or man of the 11th Field Ambulance but felt a thrill of expectancy and a keen sense of anticipation of the unknown that lay before him as he filed along the gangway from the deck of the "Princess Clementine" and stood at last upon the historic soil of France.

What a variety of thoughts that name might call up! France, for centuries the great rival of Britain in field and mart; France, the cradle of genius in literature, in science, in arms; the home of elegance, wit and good taste. France, the unconquerable, even in defeat; the heroic sufferer from the inroads of brutal foes. But to the boys who stepped upon her shores that morning of August 11th at 7.40 of the clock, France meant but one thing. Here was the land where was to be accomplished the work for which they had been preparing for months past, to do which they had made the sacrifice of their private aims, and by which they hoped to contribute, in however small a degree, to the defeat of Prussian arrogance and aggression and to the establishment of a lasting democratic peace for the world.

The scene on the docks was a busy and varied one. French labourers bustling to and fro, uttering their strange jargon and old ladies selling French bread to the new arrivals were novelties to the Western lad. The war touch was given by the sight of British Tommies handling the army stores which lay piled up high on the docks in all directions and by the appearance of some squads of German prisoners, most of them still wearing their "field grey," sullenly performing dock "fatigues". In the inevitable delay before marching away from the harbor, some attempts of course were made, to get into friendly touch with the natives, but with little success, since the average man's French vocabulary had not at that time the richness which it was destined to attain later under the tutelage of "mademoiselle of the estaminet."

The march through Le Havre to the rest camp where the night was to be spent, began as a triumphal progress. *Les Canadiens* were the cynosure of all eyes. Little children mingled with the column of route and, linking hands with the men, told of fathers and brothers at the war and begged for *souvenirs*. They got them, too. But what began as a progress, ended as a pilgrimage. The day was very hot and when the route diverged from the fashionable esplanade toward the higher parts of the town, those full packs and medical haversacks began to grow heavier and heavier. Would that long hill never come to an end! Each turn of the road revealed more and more stretches of ascending roadway of increasing steepness. It was the general opinion that the hardships of war had begun, and they were indeed tired boys that threw off their equipment, when at last they gained the rest camp at the top, and grateful was the relief afforded by "Pot. Permang." to sore and blistered feet. It was at this camp that the work of the Y.M.C.A. in the field was first seen, and an appreciative crowd of infantrymen and prospective stretcher-bearers sat around on the grass before an open air stage and applauded the talented artists, (and artistes, too) who entertained them.

The next day down the hill again filed the refreshed Unit, but by a different route (possibly to avoid harrowing memories of the ascent) and through the town to the railway station, where strenuous tasks awaited those who were called upon to "load transport". At last when all was safely stowed the men piled into the vehicles allotted to them; some into passenger coaches (of the kind, judging from appearances, that Stephenson's "Rocket" was accustomed to haul) and others, only slightly less fortunate, into horse-boxes which bore the legend painted on their sides "Hommes, 32-40; Chevaux, en long, 8." Before the end of the journey one of the men, with but a slender knowledge of French, remarked that he wished he were a "chevaux."

The Railway Transport Service does not take much account of the inner economy of the men whom it handles, and gives but little opportunity for the preparation or even the purchase of meals enroute. Consequently those men were lucky who had provided themselves, before starting, with bread and other eatables to supplement the rations issued for what proved to be a long-drawn-out journey.

The first part of the route, which passed through stately Rouen, was highly enjoyable. The men sat around the open doors of the box cars and drank in the beauty of the Normandy scenery with keen relish. There was also added that feeling,—to which a soldier on active service soon grows accustomed—of being bound for some destination which he does not know and does not have to worry about; a kind of reckless "don't know where we're going, but we're on our way" feeling, but when the men began to tire of watching the ever-changing view of the country-side, the train journey threatened to become tedious with its long stops for signals and its long, slow pulls up steep grades. But high spirits could not be damped by any of the inconveniences of troop-train travel through France. Those boys who travelled in the coaches amused themselves by climbing along the foot-boards outside and visiting their friends in different compartments while the train was in motion. Others climbed upon the tops of the box-cars or ensconced themselves in those queer little look-out seats with which, in France, so many of these vehicles are furnished. Bill Wood, alias "Smoky", most appropriately rode for a good part of the time on the engine footplate and, it is said, enjoyed a most uproariously good time with the amiable *engineur* and his assistant. Greetings passed freely from the boys to the peasant people, especially the made-moiselles, who thronged the stations and the gates of level crossings, while all became very soon accustomed to the unceasing petitions of urchins along the track for "souvenirs," "bully-hoeuf," "bisquet" or "fatigue pants." Cheery greetings were also exchanged with the lonely French sentries who, with their long rifles and long bayonets, guarded all the bridges. Some of the transport animals, in spite of their luxurious quarters, did not share the easy content of the men, but seemed to want to get out and walk. One or two of them attempted to do so, and it took some time and much verbal encouragement on the part of Hudson and McWilliams to get the beasts' legs disentangled from the knots into which they had tied themselves in their vain struggles. Not such vain struggles, either, for one of the animals succeeded to the length of kicking Drivers Hudson and Mace clear out of their car, and it was only by a supreme scrambling effort that the victims regained their places before the train gathered speed. Spirits were not so high among the men as night fell and the problem of sleeping had to be faced. There was certainly not room for everybody to lie down in comfort and the only practicable way was to sleep "basket-pattern" one over the other. By strenuous endeavours the cooks managed to rush up some dioxies of hot tea during a short stop at Abbeville at 3 a.m., and then everybody settled down again in discomfort until daybreak. This was surely coming down to the "real thing." Without a doubt the men of the 11th believed themselves real soldiers at last. Day dawned, the train was still moving. Abundant harvests of grain gleaming golden in the sunlight met the travellers' gaze as the train crawled along. Boulogne, Calais, St. Omer, Hazebrouck; familiar names these last, telling that the war was near. The scenery assumed more and more of a Flemish aspect. Windmills became more frequent and the tall hop-vine formations were to be viewed on all sides until the train drew up at Godewaersvelde Station and orders were given to alight.

Stiff and hungry the boys jumped down. A prosaic looking place it was, presenting no signs of a war. The spires of a distant monastery crowning the Mont des Cats formed the only striking feature of the landscape. Was there a canteen at the station? Not a sign of one. They must have patience. "Unload the transport." "Hitch up." "Fall in." "Move to the right in column of route." "Quick march." Another step nearer the war.

## CHAPTER II.

## WIPPENHOEK

A short march, which seemed interminably long, brought this travel-weary company to the little town of Steenvoorde. Through the narrow, winding street they marched, past the church, with its massive tower and lofty spire and through a gate into a sloping meadow whose springy turf afforded a welcome rest for tired limbs. The 1st. Field Ambulance happened to be quartered here on their way, with the First Division, to the battle of the Somme, and many an old-timer related stories of the Ypres Salient to the all-receptive new-comers. Old campaigners looked with pitying eye upon their new chums' packs, tightly stuffed, (although great coats were carried bandolier fashion in those days) and upon their cumbersome medical haversacks. "Oh, you'll soon get rid of that stuff," said they. These hints soon bore fruit and next day it was a sight to make a quartermaster weep, to see fatigue shirts and pants, deck shoes and other luxurious extras disappearing into the sacks of youthful "souvenir" hunters.

After the lusty craving of the inner man had been satisfied (and those steaks from the cookhouse of the First helped more than a little) some few, of course, asked the monumentally silly question — "Are we C.B.?" but the "wise guys" walked out through the streets of the town and took stock of their surroundings.

Steenvoorde, although situated in France, was found to be distinctly a Flemish town. The people were largely Flemish and there were as many Herbergs as Estaminets. The large numbers of these drinking establishments crowded into so small an area somewhat surprised the boys, as did also the great size of the church and the poky little shops, so unlike the spacious and airy general store that even the smallest prairie village boasts. Another noticeable feature of the town was the "square" on which some of the principal buildings and larger shops fronted. This square was paved with cobblestones and here, as in so many other towns in the war area, were parked a number of motor lorries, belonging to some "column" quartered in the town. First attempts at fraternizing with the natives and at mild flirtations with Mesdemoiselles were fairly successful; where words failed, expressive signs and the language of the eyes supplied the lack.

The first night was spent in the open field. The men rolled up in their blankets and slept soundly on the bosom of Mother Earth, with a beautiful moon shining behind the tall poplars, but before the second night bivouacs, constructed with rubber ground sheets, had sprung up all along the hedges.

During the short stay at Steenvoorde the 11th first made their acquaintance with several war features. Here they saw their first exhibition of anti-aircraft gunnery, which proved more successful than most of the efforts they afterwards witnessed as a daily occurrence, for the enemy plane was brought down out of control. Herb too, were first issued those troublesome "iron rations" which continued such a nuisance on the march until they were eventually either handed in to section stewards or were "lost on the Somme." Curious ideas naturally prevailed on many matters, such for example as the nearness of the front line. Some men stoutly maintained that they were right inside of the Ypres salient and that the Germans were even then on three sides of them. They laughed to scorn any denial of their contention and, as the sound of explosions came from a bombing school situated westward, they triumphantly exclaimed, "There what did I say, the Germans are all around us!" If only they could have seen the desolation of the Ypres salient and have compared it with the pastoral beauty of that meadowland!

On the third day a move was made. B. Section remained for a few days longer at Steenvoorde to run a sick parade and hospital during which time they learned to appreciate the culinary skill and resource of Nobby Clark, but A and C sections slung their packs and set out for a few miles' march nearer the line. The route lay along one of those cobble-stone roads, so beloved by soldiers on the march, and through the little border town of Abeele, where one side of the street is in France and the other in Belgium. French and Belgian sentries guarded the cross-roads along the frontier and when the road led off into Belgium all trace of the French language disappeared from hostelry signs and roadside posters.

Ten more minutes brought into sight a railway siding which rejoiced in the decidedly Flemish name of Wippenhoek. Immediately opposite to the siding lay a farm, in the grounds of which stood many huts and other buildings comprising a Divisional

Rest Station. It was here that the 11th were to do their first regular work as a Field Ambulance. At this point it should be explained that, of the three Field Ambulances attached to a Division, one would usually work a Rest Station (i.e. a Sick Hospital) while the other two were clearing wounded from the line and evacuating them to the Casualty Clearing Stations.

Wippenhoek was a veritable "home away from home." The tiny huts were cosy and were situated picturesquely among the apple trees of the farm orchard. The whole camp had a trim, homelike appearance that delighted the heart of Sergeant Wells, the stout landscape-gardener and town planner of C Section, and it was not long before he had "his men" busily engaged in the tasks of weeding, grass cutting and ditching around the camp.

Hospital duties at Wippenhoek differed but little from the work in the Brigade Hospitals at Bramshott. Pills were administered, temperatures taken, dressings renewed, fomentations applied and meals served in quite orthodox hospital manner. The patients' beds consisted of stretchers raised upon trestles. The M. O.'s morning visit was the culmination of a daily campaign of straightening up blankets and all equipment into a state of orderliness which was quickly reduced to chaos again when the weary band of floor-scrubbers swept through the wards like a devastating visitation. The patients were, of course, for the most part men of the Fourth Division who were also new to war experience, and the stories told by such sick men as had been in the trenches added spice to the stretcher-bearers' anticipation of the time when they would be working up near the front line.

Those who did picket duty at this camp were keenly conscious of the responsibility of their commission. Upon them, so it seemed, depended the safety of the camp and all the lives within it. The imagination of the picket was deeply stirred as he stood at the gate through the dark hours listening for the hum of hostile aircraft and the distant clamor of the gas alarm. Great excitement was caused one night by a Zeppelin which cruised overhead. The men turned out en masse, despite the midnight hour and gazed skyward for a sight of the novel spectacle. That the Canadian soldier is not lacking in the faculty of imagination was clearly evident when the various accounts of the night's disturbance were recounted next morning.

Some sanitary improvements were carried out by the 11th, during their stay at this camp. New drainage pits were dug, and here first appeared Sid. Keith's famous "Never-setting Star," the pride and joy of Major Fortin.

This life lasted from 15th August, until 2nd September, and in the interval many pleasant days were spent. Two football matches were played against the 10th Field Ambulance, who were stationed at Remy Siding close by. The first game was lost (1-0) and the second resulted in a pointless draw.

A large number of boys spent a pleasant evening at a concert put on for them by the 10th Ambulance. There were some excellent numbers on the programmes, but what will be remembered best perhaps, was the super-ragtime rendering of "Casey Jones" and "Steamboat Bill." It fairly brought the house down. Here and at the Third Canadian C.C.S. hard by some of the men found old acquaintances from the West and some pleasant hours were spent talking over old times. Visits were paid in the evenings to the neighboring towns; to the famous Poperinghe, the "Gateway of the Salient," to Boeschepe noted for its "eggs and chips" and Abeele, the lace emporium. Many handsome pieces of needlework were purchased in this little frontier town and sent back to Western Canada as souvenirs of the war in Flanders. Suppers of fried eggs and chipped potatoes, accompanied by "vin rouge" or "café" according to taste (or both, according to capacity), were much appreciated as a welcome change from the bully beef and cheese issued in camp, and the sight of Madame at her needlework and the chatter of fair Marthe as she bustled about preparing the meal, gave a welcome, homelike touch to which the heart readily responded. Some visits were also paid by the more energetic to the old monastery on the Mont des Cats. Although still occupied by a religious community the buildings were used in part as an Officers' rest camp. Those who undertook the walk were well repaid, not only by the sight of the quaint old buildings and well kept gardens of the monastery, but by the splendid scenery along the road and the distant panorama, spreading for miles on every hand, crowded with rich field of ripened grain and the golden-green abundance of the nodding hop-vines.

Church parades were conducted by the chaplains of the Third Canadian C.C.S. and several of the men, when possible, took advantage also of the quiet and simple

service of Evensong which was held daily in the Church tent at the C.C.S. One felt it to be an inspiration and a help.

During the stay at Wippenhoek a party of C Section men were issued with "tin hats" and despatched with Major Fortin, Captain Kerr and Captain Stirling to visit the dressing stations and aid posts which were manned by the Second Division Ambulances, and to learn something of the work that lay before them. Captain Kerr and five N.C.O.'s, and men went right forward to the aid posts and experienced their first real touch of the war. They left the rest of the party at the Main Dressing Station, Reninghelst, and proceeded by Motor Ambulance to various advanced stations. The Advanced Dressing Station at Bedford House, situated not far from the Lille Gate of Ypres, was a dismal ruin, but it possessed good bombproof cellars which afforded the necessary shelter for dressers and wounded alike. From these points they visited the Aid Posts at the Bluff, Spoil Bank, Dickebusch, Voormezele and La Brasserie, and heard for the first time machine-gun bullets whizzing near and shells exploding around their dugouts. Here they lived for the first time underground among the rats and the lice; here, too, they carried out their first stretcher cases, all a vivid foretaste of things to come. All returned to camp in safety, although Corporal Bryan was suffering from concussion, a shell having exploded in the entrance of his dugout.

So passed the time at Wippenhoek and when the word came for the Unit to take over the line work enthusiasm ran high. All ranks were eager and anxious to get right into the game and win a name for the 11th.

### CHAPTER III.

#### KEMMEL AND VIERSTRAAT

On September 2nd, A and C Sections with loaded transport marched, by way of Reninghelst to La Clytte. Here was situated the Main Dressing Station, the headquarters of the unit during their first spell of line work. A schoolhouse was utilized for the purpose, one large class room being used as a ward, while the other made an ideal dressing room. The Officers' quarters were situated on the upper floor and the men were accommodated in huts in a field close by. B Section remained in charge of the D. R. S. at Wippenhoek until a week later when they moved to Scherpenberg Hill. The village street presented a lively scene in the evenings; soldiers were everywhere. The *estaminets* and *magasins* were crowded, while cheerful entertainment was given to soldiers and civilians alike by Battalion bands which played in the open space beside the church.

Towards dinner hour on the second day at La Clytte, the men who happened to be outside their huts, suddenly bent their startled gaze towards the clouds as a weird unearthly sound like the wail of a lost soul was heard traversing the upper air, its melancholy cadence ending in a dull thud. A horrible thought assailed the listeners. Inside the men's quarters incredulity reigned and the "crazy mutt" who suggested a "dud shell" was promptly sat on and squashed as an alarmist. A few seconds later, however, all doubt was dispelled. Another dismal wail was heard, this time followed by a crash and a roar and while a few by-standers, mostly old timers and villagers, dived incontinently for ditches and funk holes, the majority of the new-comers affected to scorn shelter and to brave the terrors of bombardment. Six shells came over but three or four of them were duds and no casualties resulted. By the end of the second day most of the stretcher bearers had left for one or other of the advanced dressing stations which were situated at Kemmel and Vierstraat. These were manned by squads from A and C Sections respectively. Part of C section, however, remained at La Clytte as dressers, orderlies and stretcher bearers in the main dressing station.

At this point the general method adopted for clearing the line to the Casualty Clearing Stations should be described. Each Battalion in the line maintained a post in a dugout, cellar or other shelter which was situated as near to the front line as was consistent with a reasonable degree of security, and which was designated the Regimental Aid Post. Hither the regimental stretcher-bearers (battalion men) carried the wounded to whom they had administered first aid, and here were stationed the Battalion Medical Officer, his staff and a number of Field Ambulance bearers. When the wounded man had been made tolerably comfortable and emer-



gency treatment, if necessary, had been given by the Medical Officer, the Field Ambulance bearers carried him back to the A. D. S. using wheeled stretchers wherever possible. The A. D. S. was situated generally in a much quieter zone than the R. A. P.; it was more roomy and had a better supply of surgical appliances and comforts than the aid post could accommodate. Here the M. O. re-dressed any wounds needing immediate attention and despatched all patients by motor or horsed ambulance to the main dressing station where a still greater degree of comfort could be given them. Clearance thence to the Casualty Clearing Station was effected by the cars of a Motor Ambulance Convoy. This general procedure was often modified in practice. Relay posts, for example, were maintained in cases where the wounded had to be carried very long distances, or ambulances were sometimes employed farther up than the A. D. S. where the roads were not too heavily shelled. The use of light railways for clearing the wounded made the tasks of the Field Ambulance easier on many occasions.

Dusk was falling as the men of A Section, wearing for the first time their shrapnel helmets, drew near to the war-torn little town of Kemmel. Much of the beauty of this once popular resort yet remained. On the left the tall trees in the Chateau grounds, rising above the village form a background of soft shades in the twilight glow. Towering above a wooded bank on the right stood the church, battered and shaken, but not destroyed, still lifting its head as if in protest against the sacrilegious violator.

Despite its proximity to the line, Kemmel was not totally deserted of its inhabitants, and a number of little shops catered to the needs and tastes of the soldier. As the men marched into the centre of the village the signs of the past bombardments and of street fighting became more and more evident. Very few houses in this quarter of the town had escaped damage, while on one side of the principal street passages had been dug through the party walls of the houses and a whole block, together with the back premises, converted into a sandbagged and loopholed fortress, an interesting relic of a past emergency. Constituting a part of this blockhouse, and connected with it by a system of trenches, stood the "brasserie" or brewery, in which was now situated the A. D. S. The dressing room occupied a large chamber on the ground floor, at the back of which were the officers' quarters; some of the men being accommodated on the upper floor where they made their beds in the brewery vats. The majority of the men, however, when not at the aid posts, slept in the airy (not to say draughty) schoolhouse nearby.

The men who worked at the Kemmel aid posts will not readily forget their first taste of "dugout life." The work was not heavy nor was there any shelling like that encountered on later occasions, but all their experiences were so utterly novel as to be indelibly impressed on the memory. Who could forget for example the thrill he felt as he wheeled his first stretcher case past the notorious Suicide Corner, a spot honored by the frequent attentions of enemy machine gunners, and so tabooed by all between sunrise and sunset? Who does not remember the feeling of disgust at first encountering the rats that swarmed in the cellars of the ruined dairy, or in the dug-outs at posts No. 3 and 4. At the dairy, No. 2 post, it is said that the rats sent a deputation to the N. C. O. in charge, objecting that the presence of human beings disturbed their nightly revels, with the result that the men gave notice of quitting and leased some new and clean dugouts across the road, taking most inconsiderately, as it seemed to the rats, the ration bag with them. Part of the route to post No. 4 lay through leafy woods and flowery fields. The hedges were laden with blackberries, hips and haws, and the pathways were fringed with scarlet poppies. Some of the deserted gardens of Kemmel also were bright with flowers and supplied many a nose-gay for the mess table or souvenir rosebud for Someone in Canada.

Captain Secord was the Medical Officer in-charge at the A. D. S. where in the course of his duties he displayed that steady unerring decision and that deft handling of splints and bandages which were the admiration of all who worked with him. One distinguished patient, at least, came under his hand during the spell at Kemmel. Brigadier-General Lord Brooke, while accompanying Major General Watson one day to an inspection at the Chateau, was wounded by splinters from a shell which exploded on the roadway, causing several other casualties besides. Lord Brooke was carried into the Dressing Station and his wounds were dressed by Captain Secord. He evinced the utmost unconcern for his own injuries, insisting that the other cases should receive first attention and that those seriously wounded should be evacuated first.

In their spare hours between duties, the men at the A. D. S. would spend their time at the little Y. M. C. A. hut at the back of Kemmel Hill where each evening, either an impromptu concert or a cinema show was run off under primitive conditions, which did not at all detract from the men's appreciation of the shows.

In the meantime C Section men were working at the A. D. S. at Vierstraat and the R. A. P. at La Brasserie, which in this instance was used by more than one Battalion. The cellar beneath the ruined brewery was used by the M. O.'s for the aid post, while the bearers occupied a sandbagged hut a short distance away. Stretcher cases were cleared to the A. D. S. by means of hand trucks on a light railway, which proved a welcome labor saving device, and thence to La Clytte by motor ambulance. One of the Motor ambulances had a narrow escape from destruction at Vierstraat on one occasion when a shell, fortunately a dud one, fell immediately behind it.

The Dressing Station at Vierstraat consisted of some five dugouts, as picturesque as comfortable, and there was some encouragement to keep the place "spick and span." The luxuriance of these dugouts called forth Captain Stirling's remark, "This wasn't my idea of a dugout; I thought it was a hole in the mud." Here worked Captain Kerr, the remaining officers dividing their time between Kemmel, Vierstraat and La Clytte. Major Fortin was in charge of the M. D. S. and worked indefatigably at his duties as M. O. The work here approximated to that of a regular hospital, and the task of handling all the wounded from the A. D. S. was necessarily heavy, especially during the rush following the Fourth Divisional raid on September 17th. This raid kept all hands busy, the bearers of B Section as well as C, and preparations were made to cope with a larger number of casualties than actually occurred. Expectancy rose to a high pitch as the appointed hour approached. A heavy barrage was put over, and to the inexperienced ear the din seemed to be almost appalling. Presently the wounded began to arrive. Strange figures they looked, their clothes literally plastered with mud and their faces blackened as a precaution against detection whilst crossing "No Man's land." The raid had been successful and the wounded as they came down from the line were still bubbling over with enthusiasm of success and the excitement of their adventures in the enemy's lines. A few wounded prisoners also came through, and these created some stir at the various dressing stations; their buttons, shoulder straps and caps disappearing rapidly as souvenirs.

One evening the gas alarm was sounded along the line and a terrific fusillade followed. Horsed transport rushed helter-skelter along the roads leading to the back area and all ranks donned their P. H. helmets. No gas came so far as the posts manned by the Eleventh, but precautions were taken for about an hour, to the great discomfort of all. The Canadian mail had just arrived at Kemmel when the alarm was given and the men read their letters through the dim glasses of their helmets. The measures taken to protect horses that had to stand in a gas-infected area consisted at that time of putting on their nose-bags filled with damp hay. In his solicitude for the animal's safety, one of the transport sergeants in the course of instructing his men, outlined a programme of instructions that would have taken several minutes to carry out, adding as an after-thought, "then fix your own helmets."

It is perhaps worth recording that during the period just described, the men became for the first time acquainted with certain diminutive creatures that laid eggs and yet were not birds and that unlike many friends, stayed with a fellow to the very end.

A few words must here be devoted to the camp in the side of Scherpenberg Hill where B Section was quartered during the period described in this chapter. This camp was popularly and appropriately known as Mud Hill. When the men first arrived there they found some huts built into the side of the hill and very little else. If Mud Hill was to be their winter quarters, as was fondly supposed, it was clear that some fixing was necessary. Fatigue parties accordingly labored diligently in the construction of an Orderly Room and of certain other camp edifices, and in the herculean task of moving the hill down into the valley, so that the huts might stand clear and be subject to proper drainage in wet weather. The most popular pastime indulged in at this camp was rat-spearings with bayonets and jack-knives, and so numerous were the vermin that Mud Hill was seriously believed to be the cradle of the race. "Duck-walks" were laid in the mud to give access to the various camp buildings, and in endeavoring to reach some desired spot half way down the hill, it often happened that the unwary, frantically reaching for something to hold on to, found himself unable to stop until he reached the swamp at the bottom and so had to climb laboriously back again.

On September 20th A and C Sections occupied this camp for one night, having been relieved at La Clytte by Australians who told fearsome tales of the Somme front. And it was to this region that the Fourth Division was bound, if rumour were correct. On the following day the whole unit with loaded transport marched westward leaving the Salient behind them.

## CHAPTER IV.

### EPERLECQUES

Whether the boys realized it or not, when they left Mud Hill that morning they were in for a good stiff three days' march. The first day the route lay through Locre and Bailleul to Hazebrouck, a distance of almost 22 kilometres or 14 miles. The Unit marched with the Tenth Brigade in its regular place at the rear of the column of route. Moving with a brigade was quite an experience in itself. The Field Ambulance always made a start a long way ahead of scheduled time and accomplished a little route march of its own before reaching the point where the brigade was to assemble. Then the progress became a spasmodic affair. Not only were regular halts of ten minutes' duration called every hour, but delays would occur quite frequently at shorter intervals and the men would stand and try to ease their shoulders from the weight of their packs and from the cruel leather straps of the Oliver equipment, until the long line of men and transport moved on again. At the end of the day's march the Ambulance would always have a couple of miles or so to march beyond the general destination. This was at it should be, for the Ambulance men carried no rifles nor ammunition, but a cheer of relief would go up when Captain Lindsay, who always went ahead as Billeting Officer, appeared in the distance.

On the day in question the progress was fairly rapid. The most welcome halt was that which was ordered just after mid day, when all units turned into the fields and sat down to dinner. Dinner, it should be explained, consisted of meat and jam sandwiches which were washed down with draughts of chlorinated water from the men's bottles. On the subsequent days of the march tea was made at the roadside and the men enjoyed a hot drink with their mid-day meal. The first day's march was uneventful. Belgium was soon left behind. The town of Bailleul came into view and as the column marched up along the main street of this "bon town," the men wished with all their hearts that it could be their halting place for a few days. But Bailleul was quickly left behind and, when towards evening the outskirts of Hazebrouck were reached the Eleventh found themselves quartered for the night in a schoolroom. Upon their arrival it was not long before the men were scattered hither and thither through the town seeking eggs and chips, and some of the nearer establishments witnessed a long line-up for places at the tables. A pleasing incident marked the departure the next morning. The school children assembled in their classes and, just before the Unit marched off, sang the "Marseillaise" and "God save the King" which were much appreciated, and the little singers were heartily cheered by the men. The march from Hazebrouck to Arques was a weary one. The road seemed interminable, especially along the last few kilometres, but the popular marching airs sung or whistled as the boys trudged along under their packs, and selections on Bill Latter's mouth-organ, helped to cheer everybody up and keep him going. But a reward for all their labors and tribulations awaited the weary boys at Arques. To sleep on a hayloft! Luxury of Luxuries! Tired limbs sank gratefully into the yielding hay and deep, undisturbed sleep restored physical vigor for the next day's march.

The third day was perhaps the hardest of the three, although but 18 kilometres were covered. The first stages of the march were interesting enough. The towers of the churches and the quaint, steep roofs of the houses in St. Omer formed a striking contrast to the rustic architecture of village and hamlet along the country roads. The route of the march lay around the outskirts of the city and then along the main Calais highway. On the road in full marching order it was less tiring to keep moving ahead with the regular hourly rests, than to be continually stopping and starting again. Delays were constant along this interminable tree-fringed avenue and it was not long before everybody was heartily sick and tired of this spasmodic progress. At last the brigade ahead was scattered, each unit seeking its own billets independently, and the final dash of the Eleventh began. It was exhausting, but it was rather fine, the way they swung along that last three kilometres, footsore and shoulder sore, but still singing and whistling, right up to the gates of the Chateau d'Eperlecques.

The pleasant ten days spent at Eperlecques supplied perhaps the brightest spot in the recollections of the first year spent in France. The only sign of war in this remote region was the sight of the soldiers themselves. The grounds surrounding the chateau were extensive and afforded many a sheltered nook where a man might write his letters or enjoy a book at his ease. There was a remarkable variety of trees in the grounds and their graceful arrangement won the admiration of all who had an eye for the picturesque. The foliage aloft was mirrored, in all its variegated beauty, in a little ornamental lake whose surface was ever and anon disturbed by the plunge and the sunlit flash of the swimmer's body as the men refreshed and exercised their limbs in the cool depths. There is less taste displayed in the internal arrangements of French country mansions than in the laying out of the grounds which surround them. The exterior of the building might be more or less pretentious, but the interior would almost invariably strike one as mean and awkward, not to say uncompromisingly ugly.

The bare prison-like rooms, however, were quite acceptable as billets and even the attic, which was occupied by C. Section, was voted an improvement on the dugout, especially as one was enabled to take his bed on sunny afternoons and meditate or sleep, in Eastern fashion, on the flat housetop. The lower rooms were occupied by the sick hospital which was manned by A Section. The officers' quarters were on the second floor while the B Section men and the Horse Transport occupied snug billets over the stables. It was from Eperlecques that R.S.M. Jevons left the Eleventh. He had for some time suffered from an attack of Myalgia which eventually resulted in his being sent to an English hospital. His place was filled temporarily by Staff Sgt. Brown, who acted as Sgt. Major until the arrival of R.S.M. MacArthur in December.

Several features of the life at the Chateau are well worth recalling. The morning ablutions at the stable pump, for example, and the line up along the laurel bank for meals. When these had been served in the rustic cookhouse the men would make their way to the lawn and, seated at the foot of some ancient tree, would make their repast peacefully as the petulant persistence of the wasps would allow. Several football games afforded pleasant diversion, and in the matches with the 44th Battalion and the 13th Field Ambulance, who were encamped in the Chateau grounds, the Eleventh were victorious. A third game, played between the Horse and Mechanical Transport and the Medical Section, resulted in a win for the latter (2-1). One momentous day an afternoon parade was called for the purpose of issuing a strange looking haversack, square and flat, the use of which was explained in a lecture by Major Moshier. The haversack contained the famous new "Box Respirator Small," a vastly improved anti-gas appliance, which was to supersede the older P.H. Helmets. Henceforth gas drill with the Box Respirators became a regular feature of the life of the Unit. One evening an alarm of fire was given which, although it proved to be false, served to reveal the magnanimous character of some of the men. At the suggestion of danger their first thought was not of themselves, but of their packs, those packs from which they had suffered so much but a few days before, and their first act was to fling the said packs from the windows into safety upon the grass below. The most touching sight of all was to see the same men carrying those packs toilsomely up stairs again, amid the caustic remarks of their unfeeling comrades.

The less immediate surroundings of the chateau, the village of Eperlecques, the country lanes and wooded hillside, were no less picturesque than the grounds. A ramble up hill and down dale through the prettiest of rustic and woodland scenery was invested with a new charm in the eyes of men whose memories of the battle area were so fresh, and even the morning route marches were viewed in a new light and became more of a pleasure than a toil, especially if the halts were made in the vicinity of heavily laden blackberry bushes. Recollections of evenings spent in the kitchen of some friendly rustic's home, of the chatter with mademoiselle over her lace making, of the music of the band in the village square beside the noble old church, remained bright in the memory of all through the nightmare of the Somme.

There are some events that at the time of their occurrence impress one with a sense of their deep significance for the future. Of such a nature was the service of the Holy Communion on the second Sunday morning. The Sacrament was administered in a sequestered corner of the Chateau grounds surrounded by lofty trees in whose branches the breezes played soft organ harmonies to the voices of an innumerable choir of singing birds. The officiating clergyman was a comrade of those who communicated: Private F. C. Chapman. As the boys knelt on the sward and received the sacred bread and wine an unusual solemnity seemed to hold them in its power,

as if they knew that one of their companions was even then taking his last Sacrament and would, but a few days later, enter the Sacred Presence itself.

This happy holiday, as one might well term it, came to an end all too soon, and on the evening of October 3rd, the men marched away in high spirits, under a perfect evening sky, along the road to St Omer, the first stage of their journey to the battlefield of the Somme.

## CHAPTER V.

### TO THE SOMME

The time had now arrived when a long farewell must be taken of all such pleasant scenes and experiences as had filled the past few days. Sterner things had to be faced. To begin with, the railway journey southward could hardly be described as a dream of delight. Upon their arrival at St. Omer the Unit entrained in the old familiar horse-boxes. These vehicles were filled with a rich, healthy smell of the stable, but when shovel and manure-fork had been vigorously plied for fifteen minutes, the cars were rendered, if less "healthy," somewhat more habitable. During that night-journey attempts to sleep were not particularly successful. One would be rocked to sleep right enough, but only to be jerked awake again a few moments later. One of the men was heard to mutter in drowsy exasperation, "I believe the ruddy train's running on square wheels."

The Unit detrained at Doullens on the following afternoon and a square meal at a canteen near the station satisfied an urgent need which had been keenly felt for some hours. After a short march, in the course of which the men made acquaintances with that rich variety of mud so abundant on the roads of the Somme, they arrived at their billets for the night, which lay between the villages of Amplier and Orville. The barns and outhouses where the men slept were not what one could term luxurious, though a decided improvement upon the horse-box accommodation of the night before.

The weather next day was ideal for the march. A fresh breeze was blowing from the west, bringing with it a hint of approaching winter. The boys swung along the road in their best style. The way lay over grassy downs and rich agricultural lands. Neither trees nor farm-houses were numerous except in the vicinity of towns and villages and the landscape presented a desolate, lonesome appearance. At each stage of the road, Beauquesne, Puchevillers, Herissart, more and more abundant signs of the nearness of a great battle became evident. English, Scottish and Irish troops were billeted here, there and everywhere. Negro troops of the British West Indies Regiment were met in Puchevillers. Upon the roads were parked hundreds of lorries standing end to end for miles without a break, while the remaining road space was thronged with all kinds of motor traffic and the air filled with the odor of gasoline exhaust fumes. Camps appeared in ever increasing numbers at the roadside. The streets of the villages, tramped by innumerable feet of the moving troops, had been converted in many places into a lake of liquid mud from side to side, every wall, pump, and telegraph pole being coated to a height of several feet with the accumulated splashes of mire.

Shortly after the mid-day halt for dinner, the Unit marched through the streets of Herissart and located in a field at the eastern end of the village, where they pitched their tents and stayed for three days.

Here, the 1st Field Ambulance once more shared the same field with the 11th, and once more stories of the Battlefield ahead were re-counted by the old-timers.

Herissart was not, perhaps, a typical example of a Picardy village, but it was a fair representative of those villages lying at the back of our lines in the Acre region at that late Autumn season. On entering it the whole aspect of the place filled one with a sense of the forlorn. Imagine a village consisting of half a dozen narrow winding streets, not lined as in rural England with the curtained windows and wide doorways of picturesque cottages, but hemmed in by the blank walls of neglected barns and stables and filled with mud which often lay inches deep. For in Picardy the farm-houses are not situated on the land pertaining to them, but are all huddled together in the villages. The farm buildings enclose a courtyard with the inevitable manure pile in the middle. An irregular paved path surrounds it and gives access to the various outbuildings as well as to the house. No windows appear on the street front; only the heavy door of the wagon driveway. At the back of the yard a gateway leads in some

instances to a small orchard, but this most picturesque feature of the village is almost invariably hidden from the sight of the passer-by.

Thus there was but slight encouragement to the men to spend their evenings in the village. Several battalions were quartered nearby and in consequence every *ca-taminet* and village shop (and they were indeed few and far between) was crowded to the doors. The little Y.M.C.A. establishment was also quite inadequate to cater for the large inflow of men and it would have been quite impossible to crowd another man into the cinema tent while the pictures were showing. Those whose evening recreation took the form of walking in the direction of Contay could witness a distant view of the multicolored signal lights and the flares of burning cordite on the heights of the Ancre battlefield. It was an impressive sight that stirred deeply the imagination of those who saw it and who were so soon to play a part in that great conflict.

Rain was falling in torrents on the morning of October 8th, when camp was struck and the transport wagons were loaded in preparation for moving. Luckily everybody was astir early, for not long after breakfast the ground upon which the men had slept the night before was an inch under water. It was no light job to load wagons in such weather conditions as prevailed that morning. The rain-sodden tents could not be forced into their bags, but had to be tied around with rope and, before many minutes, tents, poles, bags and men were liberally plastered with the everpresent clinging mud. The parade made a sorry-looking spectacle when the order to fall in was given and a bedraggled, mudstained company marched away in the direction of Contay. This was but a short march. The weather cleared up, but the men arrived in a wet and clammy condition. The camping ground for the night was situated on the side of a muddy hill in the adjoining hamlet of Vadencourt. The heavy, cold, wet and slippery tents were unrolled and pitched, only to be struck again and reloaded the next morning for the last day's march.

The scenes along the road for the last thirteen kilometres revealed more clearly than ever the increasing nearness of the great battle. Troops were on the move in all directions. The fresh troops marching in met tired, war-worn battalions with sorely depleted ranks plodding along through the mud, looking, as was once said of Dante, like men who had been through hell. Some batteries of French Artillery had passed through Contay the day before, armed with the famous "Seventy-fives." Lorries passed in a constant stream. Motor Ambulances came rushing from the battle area laden with their precious freight and returned for more loads. The road lay through a bare and desolate region of rolling upland. The hillsides were covered with huts, tents, horselines, incinerators and all the unlovely paraphernalia of military camps. The grass was for the most part trampled under the mud, leaving the countryside painted a dismal dun-colored monotone.

From the crest of the hill above Bouzincourt a wide landscape burst into view. In the middle-distance the roofs and chimneys of a town could be seen dominated by a towering, shot-torn steeple whose top was bent downwards and pointed like a finger over the houses below. A sensation of awe was felt by everyone as he beheld for the first time the far-famed hanging Virgin of Albert.

The village of Bouzincourt was left behind and the outskirts of Albert almost reached when the column of route turned off the road to the right and crossed a field that seemed several degrees muddier than the last few camping places. "Here's our home," exclaimed the boys, "the usual mud-hole." The tents were pitched in the driest ground available and the men settled down to await their call to action.

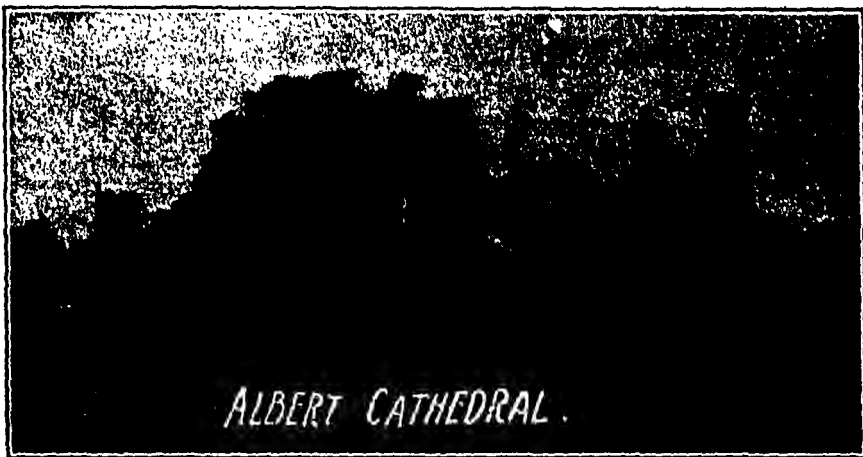
## CHAPTER VI.

### ALBERT

"Who's coming down town to-night?" This was invariably the soldier's first question to his chums on arriving at any new—— location and little groups of men would slip off after dismissal in search of eggs or steak or chips. Others less affluent, or perhaps less epicurean, hastened away after partaking of their frugal meal from the cookhouse to enjoy some fun or listen to a band concert. At Albert, somehow, it was different. Men's imaginations had been stirred for many weeks past by all they had read of the great offensive between the Ancre and the Somme, by which the enemy had been thrown back almost from the gates of this very town and dislodged from the high land dominating it. The men of the 11th, like all other Canadians, were not accustomed to indulge in heroics, preferring to hide enthusiasm under a cloak of assumed indifference, yet it was evident, on this occasion, that everyone's first thought

was to view this famous city, the victim of merciless bombardments, the base from which many victorious British attacks had been made.

On their first evening spent in Albert, then, the men made their way in considerable numbers into the town. The streets were narrow and muddy and, in spite of the moonlight, dark and treacherous to unwary feet. The streets through which they first passed presented a forbidding aspect. Nearly all the inhabitants had deserted their homes; some houses were shuttered and barred, others were occupied as billets by the troops or exhibited a naked desolation through their gaping window frames. A few shopkeepers remained to do business with the soldiers in souvenirs and button polish behind their closely shielded windows. Passing a wrecked warehouse and other evidences of enemy hate the newcomers reached at length the open space before the ruined church. Viewed under the flooding light of the moon the scene of destruction that met their gaze was magnificent in its awfulness. High above the wreckage of the city's heart the haggard, tortured shape of the church tower still reared its head as if unconquerable still in spite of the enemy's guns, while the Virgin, once its topmost crown and glory now torn from her pedestal, leaned out over the town, holding forth the Holy Infant in mute appeal. This moonlit pageant of war's ravages will never be forgotten by those who saw it. It was ghastly, yet it was sublime.



By way of welcome to the newcomers that evening a few German shells from a long-range gun came whining over into the outskirts of the town, a form of demonstration to which everybody was soon familiar.

On October 11th, the second day after their arrival, the greater part of the men proceeded into the forward area on duty as stretcher-bearers, but the story of this branch of the work must be reserved for another chapter. Four days later the remainder of the men took charge of the Main Dressing Station and Canadian Corps Sick Parade in Albert, the camp beside the Bouzincourt Road, known as the "Brickfields," being occupied by the transport and later also by the stretcher-bearers between their spells of duty up the line. The men of the Horse Transport will never forget those horse-lines in the Brickfields' swamp nor the wet feet from which they suffered for weeks on end.

The Main Dressing Station was situated in a school house which, though standing close to the cross roads in that part of the town which had suffered most heavily from the bombardments, was yet almost intact, only the upper floor at one end being materially damaged. The building stood back from the road and was fronted by a square court-yard which afforded an excellent parking ground for the Motor Ambulance Convoy cars. From the steps of the school house one could look out upon the ceaseless stream of transport, horse and motor, passing to and fro in all directions, and the long lines of infantry marching beneath the overhanging Virgin on their way up to the forward area or returning thence. At the back of the building, between it and a high

brick wall, rushed one of the branches of the Ancro River, rendering the basement very damp and unwholesome as a dormitory, the floor being almost on a level with the water. The men, however, found it handy for ablutions and for the cleansing of blood-stained stretchers from the Dressing Station.

The range of rooms on the main floor had been fitted up as a dressing room. Tables loaded with piles of bandages, absorbent cotton and gauze cut into convenient sizes for immediate use were ranged round the walls. Surgical instruments, antiseptics and splints were placed ready to hand. Only stretcher-cases were received (walking cases being handled by the 13th Field Ambulance at Tara Hill); the wounded came through in a steady stream, and, after an attack by our troops, while the stretcher-bearers were up the line, it took all available men working at high pressure to cope with the work and keep the station cleared; men of the Horse Transport co-operating with the Medical Section in the work of loading and unloading ambulances. At all times, however, all hands were kept busy improving the premises or otherwise preparing for a rush of cases.

Let the reader imagine himself standing in the Dressing Room and watching what is going forward. There is a temporary lull and the orderlies are gaining time by cutting gauze or wrapping it for padding upon leg and arm splints. Others are clearing away fragments of old dressing, clothing and equipment which had gathered upon the floor. Clerks are busy numbering stacks of medical cards. The smell of acetylene gas from the lamps overpowers all other scents. Very soon is heard the sound of a motor ambulance arriving. The form of a stretcher-bearer appears a few moments later shouldering aside the curtain in the doorway. He and his mates deposit a stretcher with its load of suffering manhood upon the trestles which stand ready, and helpful hands are at once busy cutting and stripping away the muddy and rain-soaked clothing and the blood-soaked bandages which have been hastily applied up the line. An orderly stands by with a bottle of iodine and brush, with which he proceeds to paint a small yellow patch on the patient's breast as an antiseptic preliminary to the hypodermic injection of anti-tetanic serum which he next proceeds to administer. The regular dose is 1500 units, quite a fearsome looking quantity to pump into a person, but, though the patient appears to hate this part of the treatment more than all the rest, he is assured by the bystanders that lockjaw would be infinitely worse and that he will not mind half so much the next injection a week hence. A large "T" in indelible pencil on the forehead now identifies the patient as one who has received this injection.

The Medical Officers now attend to the man's injuries, carrying out such surgery as is immediately necessary and directing the cleansing and re-dressing of the patient's wounds. Meanwhile other cases are carried in and receive attention in turn, dressings and splints being renewed in every instance. Clerks go round from stretcher to stretcher removing the slips which have been attached to the wounded at the Aid Post and replacing them with the Medical Cards on which they enter full particulars of the men, their length of service, the nature of their injuries and any special treatment given. Here is one patient in a state of unconsciousness. His particulars are ascertained from his paybook. The clerks enter all these details in their books and upon "chits" which will be turned into the Orderly Room for statistical purposes.

While the wounded are waiting to be placed on the car for the Casualty Clearing Station the orderlies, with perhaps a Chaplain assisting, make them as comfortable as possible. The heavy, mud-laden boots and puttees are removed and dry, warm socks put on. Hot drinks of coffee or cocoa are given them from the little lunch-counter presided over by the fatherly "Smithy," the famous "Cocoa-King," or his assistant, John Edgar. Each patient goes out comfortably wrapped in two warm blankets and puffing at a most welcome cigarette. It is evident that he is feeling more cheerful as the line is left farther behind and "Blighty," dear old "Blighty" seems to draw nearer and nearer.

Yes, it was here perhaps in Albert, that the men of the 11th learned to appreciate the grit and endurance of the Infantryman and his cheerfulness in the most trying and depressing circumstances. It was hard to realize that these great-hearted chaps who lay so patient on their stretchers, calmly recounting their experiences or even joking with the orderlies, were suffering the dire effects of exposure to cold and wet, of fatigue indescribable, of stiffened limbs and aching wounds and of the moral and mental depression that the hideous nightmare of war could not fail to bring upon the stoutest-hearted. It was evident that many such were but holding off the spectre



of Death at arm's length, until the re-action should set in and bring the end. But how many on the other hand wrestled with and overthrew the adversary by the greatness of their spirit. It frequently happened, however, that wounded men died in the Dressing Room or in the ambulance on the way thither, and it fell to the men of the Unit to perform the last duties to the deceased preparatory to interment. As the body, covered with the flag was conveyed through the streets of the town, soldiers along the road would stop and salute.



The arrangements of the Main Dressing Station were in the hands of Major Moshier, and B Section, under his charge, undertook the first duties there. Later the M.D.S. was manned by all sections, each of which also supplied stretcher-bearers for the line work. Lieut.-Col. McQueen, in addition to his exacting headquarters duties, took an active part in the work of the Dressing Room when a rush was on, and it was often the Colonel who, standing nearest, grabbed the handles of the stretcher and assisted to load it on the car.

On November 3rd a plan was adopted by which the 11th Canadian and the 56th Imperial Field Ambulances received patients, sick and wounded, on alternate days only, the latter Unit having their Headquarters across the street from the 11th. This arrangement afforded much relief to the M.O.s' and men, especially when the bearers were doing line work and so were not available to assist in the Dressing Room or the Sick Parade.

Life, at the M.D.S. was not by any means devoid of excitement. The enemy paid frequent and most unwelcome attentions to Albert. Often he would throw shells into the town and the men became quite accustomed to the sound of Fritz's gun, like the plucking of a bass viol string, and the following whine and crash. Speculations as to the landing place of the shells usually developed into heated arguments as to the rate of motion of a shell and of sound-waves respectively. But the most exciting times were experienced when enemy aircraft came over on moonlight nights dropping bombs and spraying the streets with machine gun bullets. After the first few days of residence the men had deserted their unhealthy quarters in the basement on the level of the River Ancre for drier and warmer apartments on the upper floor, but whenever a hostile plane came over, a Sergeant would yell out the somewhat ambiguous order "Everybody up and downstairs!" and no one, not even the most critical student of English, stayed to quibble, but grabbing his blankets, pants and boots, "beat it" helter-skelter downstairs. Not that he was afraid of the bombs of course—but if he had to obey orders, why should he not get there first and secure the least draughty corner of the vaults; in fact, the first awakening scare over, many fellows crept back again to the greater comfort above. These raids did not result in many casualties, but once when the daring "son of a gun" sailed over in broad daylight he came very near scoring heavily off the 11th. Apparently he was trying to bomb the roadway, but one of his missiles fell plump into the back premises of an empty house close to the hospital, adjoining in fact the Officers' quarters. Directly the roar of the explosion was heard everybody sought cover wherever he could, or could not, find it. The ostrich who, they tell us, buries his head in the sand to hide himself, has nothing on man for unreasonable blindness in such an emergency. Everybody ducked and ran, even if it was only to hide himself behind a stretcher. Landry and Crookshank dived simultaneously for the shelter of one little school desk and contrived to wedge at least their fore-quarters beneath it. Corporal Seymour wrapped himself in a door curtain, while Captain Seord, happening to be in the yard, took sanctuary in the little stone shrine in the centre. The batmen who were eating their dinner above the Officers' quarters rushed for the narrow staircase, but "Piccaninny" Kerins, the first to reach it, got himself caught on a nail and so held up the whole procession of struggling humanity. "What goes up must come down" as Bert Freeman remarked, and in a few seconds down came the bricks on all sides, crashing through the roofs as well as littering the premises for many yards around. Dinner was being served both in the Officers' mess and in the men's out-of-doors cookhouse and the cooks' concoctions, whether in dixie or saucepan, in dish or in messin, received a liberal addition in the shape of dust and brickbats. Major Fortin was the only sufferer, being struck on the head by a piece of brick.

The regular diversions of the men when off duty were of a less stirring character. The cinema was near, the curiosity of some led them to visit the public gardens with their quaint grottoes and shrines; others amused themselves by dodging the military police and exploring the ruined church for portable souvenirs. Towards the end of the 11th's stay in Albert, it was noticed that many of the civilians returned to the town and opened their shops again and many Christmas presents for friends in Canada were purchased in Albert.

Captain Stirling, with a number of A and C section men, was during this time, in charge of the Sick Parade at the "North Chimneys," the name given to a shattered factory on the north side of the town. It was a miserable hole. The work was carried on in a large machine shop, whose broken roof let in abundant streams of rain water and whose floor was literally strewn with heavy masses of scrap-iron. Here would come a wretched-looking crowd of sick men day by day; hundreds of them, not only from the Canadian Corps but from all the troops in the district around. Infantrymen—Canadian or Imperial—Artillerymen, Labor Battalion men, Signallers, men of every conceivable branch of the Service. They came, some of them, miles through mud and water, from trenches and gunpits to see the M.O. Mudstained, haggard and pale-faced, they waited wearily in the long queue, buoyed up perhaps with the hope of a week or two in a rest camp or even in Blighty. Some few—the lucky ones,

who shall say?—were evacuated. The greater part had their dream shattered by the verdict "M & D." They took their medicine or had their sore feet bandaged and returned to duty once more. The doctor in charge of a Sick Parade had no enviable job. He had to discriminate between the genuine sick man and the "lead-slinger"; he had to temper his natural sympathy with his professional judgment and when he had been doing this continuously for the greater part of the day and still saw a long line-up waiting, to say the least he found it trying to his nerves and a strain on his patience. After three weeks at the North Chimneys the Sick Parade was moved to the out-buildings of the school, the basement being used to accommodate sick men staying overnight.

The stretcher-bearers when not up the line stayed at the Brickfields rest camp, where in spite of the execrable weather they managed to spend a fairly tolerable existence. They occupied several bell-tents and a marquee which were heated by means of braziers, cunningly contrived from oil drums or anything that came handy and finished with chimneys made from biscuit tins or from 18 pounder shell cases fitted together. It is said that necessity is the mother of invention, and the much-felt need for something like comfort in their tent-homes called forth much ingenuity on the part of the men in improvising, not only braziers, but little writing tables, seats, candlesticks, and other devices that did much to make the tents more habitable. The fuel supply was something of a problem, for there was no regular issue of coal at this time and resort was had to the science of "scrounging." The most famous exponents of this science were Chris. Best and "Jock" Rankin, who, though they worked by quite different methods, were equally successful in delivering the goods. Best was always on the lookout for signs of buried fuel. A dark patch on the horizon would attract his gaze. He would shade his eyes for a moment, then dash off and in three strides be on the spot. He always returned to camp carrying a bagful and wearing a cryptic smile. "Jock," on the other hand, used the "occult method." He would sit silent for hours together "seeing sights." All of a sudden, when the spell was complete he would dash out from the tent, re-emerging from the darkness a few minutes later with a couple of large packing cases in his hands, sufficient to keep the tent warm for twenty-four hours.

To most of the men this camp, in spite of its dreary surroundings, was a real home, especially in cases where a congenial bunch could get together and stay together in one tent. When the bearers were plodding along through the mud on their way back from the Aid Post the picture in their mind's eye of the glowing brazier in the tent at the Brickfields was to their tired spirits like the lights of home to a belated wayfarer. Some men, however, on squads whose time was divided between the camp and occasional duties in Albert did not enjoy the same comforts as their more fortunate comrades. They would discover on their return to the tent that some boy had swiped the wash-bowl and the hatchet and had unearthed the hidden coal-hoard, that there was no wood for the brazier, that the chimney was on the blink and that some guy had, in their absence, used the unoccupied tent as a bath-room. The rain, too, had soaked in at more points than one and, indeed, the whole place looked like the back end of all things. The trouble was that, no sooner had they fixed things up than away they went again to the M. D. S. or the Sick Parade, leaving their home to the spoiler.

A good deal of reading was got through at the Brickfields and many a warm discussion of some live topic whilled away the hours, or a box, lighted with two or three candles, would be set up, with packs placed around it for seats, and a quiet game of cards would make more than the evening pass quickly.

It was here that the men first came into touch with Captain Plunkett of the Y.M.C.A., and his musical quartette. This party gave their concerts and sing-songs for several nights after the 11th arrived at Albert, and everybody who attended them came away cheered and heartened by the Captain's incurable optimism and happy smile. No one can estimate what that smile has meant to many a poor, fed-up lad with a fit of the blues. The house would be rocking with laughter at one of the Captain's jokes when he would turn the tables and make the boys provide their own merriment by asking those on one side to sing "Tipperary," while those on the other sang "You Wore a Tulip." The result was a scream. "Tipperary" was nearly always finished first through, over-eagerness to get to "Good-bye Leicester Square." It was at these sing-songs that the boys picked up those famous parodies and soldier ditties which they were never tired of singing on the march or round the brazier. The plaintive:

"Oh, my! I don't want to die,  
I want to go home; Swe-e-e-t home,  
A-----men."

will always call to mind one of the bright spots in those dark days on the Somme. So also will the Machine Gunner's warning:

"Keep away from Mouquet—  
Dear old Mouquet—  
'Way from Mouquet Farmi."

and that stirring story of how "We sat over here" (in a shell hole) and "Fritz sat over there" until

"We seized a bunch of Mills grenades  
And bombed the lobster out—  
Fritz is in a shell hole now,  
Tiddley-um."

Sunday on the Somme was, for the most part, no different from any week-day, but opportunities were found for the men not on duty to attend not only Church parades, but also the Holy Communion arranged by the Chaplain Service and the evening services of the Soldiers' Christian Association, which were both conducted in a ruined house in Albert. This house was crowded to the doors every Sunday night and many had to be turned away, so highly were these services appreciated.

So much for the seven weeks at Albert. Let us go back and learn how the stretcher-bearers fared up the line.

## CHAPTER VII.

### COURCELETTE

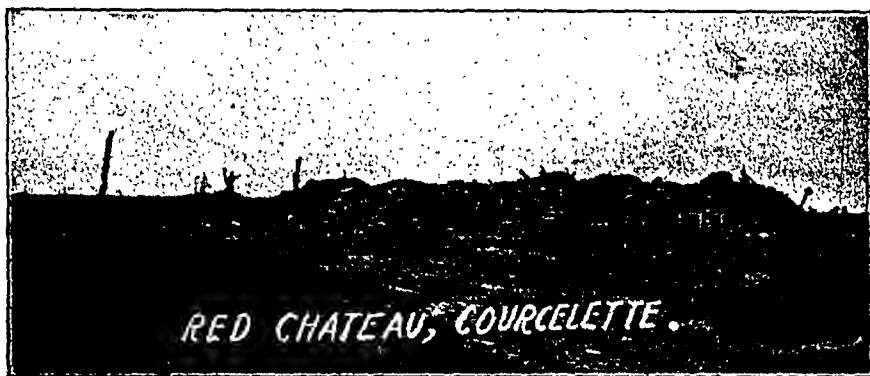
Stretcher bearers of the 11th were not kept very long in suspense as to the kind of work that lay before them on the Somme Front. On the second day after the arrival at the brickfields the bearers were lined up by squads in light marching order, with steel helmets, box respirators, shell dressings and stretcher slings. Headed by Major Fortin, this company marched away through the streets of Albert, past the ruined church and out along the famous Bapaume road. Little by little the view of the great battlefield unfolded itself, a pale grey expanse of hill and valley, void of any landmark save for a few stripped trees and the long road stretching across it like a ribbon. A mile or two from Albert the road reached the brow of a sharp descent, whence a view was obtained of the little valley in which had once stood the village of La Boisselle. Here the opposing forces of Britain and Germany had faced each other for nearly two years until the memorable First of July, since when the foe had been driven back, step by step, out of sight behind those grey heights. The bearers marched on past the tent hospital for walking wounded, at Tara Hill, down the slope, leaving behind them the familiar sight of tents, huts and buildings and entering the weird country of the cave dwellers. They saw the crumbling trenches, the huge mine craters, the torn up earth, the heaps of burst and tattered sand bags, and the broken trailing wire showing where the front lines had been. Turning off the main road towards Contalmaison they passed upwards through a sunken road lined with old dugouts, smashed and tumbled by the intensity of the British artillery fire into an indescribable confusion of beams, posts, sandbags and sheet iron.

From this region the heavy artillery harassed and pounded the enemy's lines and communications. Their guns were emplaced every where amid the piled up wreckage of the battlefield, only slightly screened from aerial observation, some of them brought into position on the roadside. Two such were in action when the party passed them and the effect, to say the least, was stunning.

A mile or so further on they reached their first destination, Casualty Corner, which was to be the headquarters for the bearers during this spell of line work. From this place one could overlook the wood of Contalmaison to the right, while to the left the Bapaume road could be seen on the skyline. A lane to the left followed a shallow depression known, from the excavations along its slopes, as the "Chalk Pits." The near edge of this valley had been used by the enemy as artillery positions and as a shelter for his reserve troops, and the banks were literally honeycombed with deep, comfortable dugouts. Now the tables were turned and the British heavies lined the other bank, snugly concealed behind it, ever and anon raising their barrels and hurling death into the enemy's lines.

The bearers found good accommodation in these dugouts. They had been strongly constructed and neatly finished inside with good lumber. Electric lighting had been installed, but some fragments of wire and a few insulations only remained. Good roomy bunks had been built for sleeping, and as they lay at least twenty feet below the hillside, the booming of the adjacent guns was hardly sufficient to disturb even light sleepers. Another tier of apartments lay beneath. These were occupied by a burial party, and the bearers as they lay in their bunks could overhear, through openings in the boards, some of the grim stories with which the gravediggers regaled each other from the wealth of their experiences.

At this time both the First and Fourth Canadian Divisions were in the line and the authorities found it convenient to pool the stretcher bearers and the horse and motor ambulances at their disposal, using them as circumstances directed. The bulk of the men of the 11th manned the Aid Post in the village of Courcellette to which about half of the bearers proceeded on the night of their arrival. Courcellette lay rather more than two miles forward from Casualty Corner but on the farther side of the Albert-Bapaume Road, and the route thither lay through the village of Pozieres. Three small Artillery aid posts, two of them in the direction of Martinpuich and one at Contalmaison were each manned by a squad of bearers. One of these posts was roofed merely by a tarpaulin and the men there had a most uncomfortable time when the shells were falling near. The remainder of the bearers stayed back as relief squads, a change over at Courcellette being made every twenty-four hours.

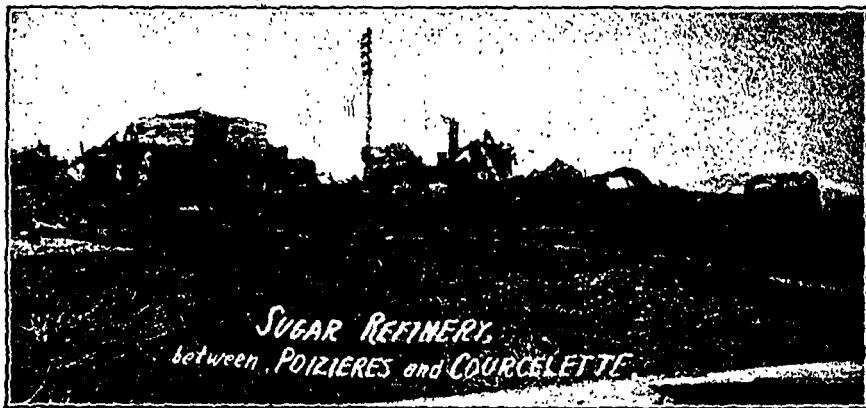


Relieving squads were awakened at the eerie hour of 2 a.m., and after a hasty breakfast were marched off without delay so that the relieved squads could be out before daybreak. In single file they would pick their way along the winding trail past the chalk pit avoiding shell holes and other man traps, stumbling every now and then over old signal wires or shifting the clumsy ration bags to the other (or somebody else's) shoulder. "Hurry up boys, we're just going to fire" some gunner would sing out from the darkness behind a 6 inch gun. No sooner was the last man past the muzzle than, Woof! a deafening roar, a battering sensation all over, a dazzling flash of orange colored light and then everything purple awhile.

For a distance of perhaps half a mile the route lay along the Bapaume Road, through the village of Pozieres, made famous by the Australians, who stormed, took and then held it under terrific fire. The village was literally levelled to the ground. Of the houses only cellars remained heaped over with great piles of shattered brickwork, timber, plaster and the remains of household effects. One wall, not of a dwelling, but of a concrete redoubt, alone remained standing and even this was battered into a hideous ruin. By night it was hard to tell where the village had stood. The road pushed its way through the wreckage which lay piled up at its sides in a ragged black fringe against the glare from distant star shells. A very large amount of traffic of all kinds passed over this road by day and by night especially when, for several hours after sunset, all the transport bound for destinations beyond Pozieres made its way forward and (if luck were in) returned, and a double stream of men, pack mules, lorries, limbers and ambulances might be seen, splashing their way through pools of

mud between those mysterious deserts of death and desolation on either hand. By the small hours of the morning however, there was but little stirring and the bearers having the road nearly to themselves, realized fully the awful lonesomeness of that blasted countryside. At the end of the village near the ruined mill the road reached the crest of the ridge and was thenceforth under enemy observation. Screens were suspended along wires to hide all movements on the higher stretches of the road, but this did not prevent the enemy shelling it night and day, as many a smashed limber and dead mule gave abundant witness to say nothing of the ever changing contour of road surface and mud holes. A few abandoned tanks lay near the road like primeval reptiles basking in their native slime. One of these which lay near the Courcellette Road was persistently shelled by the enemy and its locality was regarded by all as a most unhealthy spot. The bearers branched to the left from the main road on leaving Pozieres and followed the Courcellette road for nearly a mile to Creighton's dugouts, where they mounted the bank of the road and approached the village across country.

At the time of the Eleventh's first spell of work at Courcellette, the enemy was holding an advantageous position in Regina Trench, whence he had good observation, of all the country lying between him and Pozieres. Consequently all movement by daylight through this tract was a perilous hazard. The dead lay thick around the trenches where they had fallen a month before at the taking of Courcellette by the Second Division. Some bodies even lay sunk into the road itself, passed over unheeded



ed by the living. Making his way along this slough of a road, leaping, slipping, splashing from side to side to avoid shell holes, encountering the sickening odor of the mouldering slain, viewing the mangled landscape revealed in grotesque relief by the waning moon from behind breaking clouds and by the evil paleness of the Verey Lights, hearing the roar and rush of the British artillery, the whine and crash of enemy shells and the demon whisper of wandering bullets, a man would half believe himself in the throes of a hideous dream of the Valley of the Shadow of Death.

The Aid post in Courcellette from which the men of the Eleventh first cleared the wounded was situated in a long underground gallery made by the enemy during his occupation of the village by connecting, reinforcing and lining with lumber the cellars of several ruined houses. Bunks stood along the sides of the passages and afforded sleeping room for most of the bearers, although on one occasion the crowd was so great that many were glad to squat down in any corner they could find. Here they lived for twenty-four, sometimes for forty-eight hours at a stretch in this dark, dirty and evil smelling "rabbit warren." A few candles, jealously husbanded, gave but a meagre relief to the gloom and when the stock threatened to become exhausted the boys gathered the candle grease from the bunks and walls and burned it in these little improvised tin lamps with string for wicks, known to the soldier as "bitches." It was not by any means a desirable spot but it was bomb proof and that was what really mattered in Courcellette. From this post the bearer squads carried the wounded overland to Creighton's, a distance of only about 700 yards, but over country pitted with shell holes at every yard and, in the village, piled everywhere with debris of all

descriptions. If the enemy shelled the roads and open country freely, he bombarded the village almost without intermission, paying particular attention, for obvious reasons, to the neighbourhood of the galleries he once occupied himself, so that the work of the bearers, what with the nervous as well as the bodily strain, was not by any means easy.

The first squads to carry out wounded from the galleries were accompanied by Capt. MacKinnon and Staff Sgt. Hammond, who thus made themselves personally acquainted with the work the bearers had to undertake. They experienced the worst conditions too, for the enemy was shelling the village freely at this time. Several special trips were made to various advanced points to bring in wounded men and adventures sometimes resulted. Jordet and Kenyon, returning from a signallers' post whither they had gone on such an errand, and unable in the darkness to find the entrance to the galleries, were for two hours wandering amid the labyrinthine ruins of the village with shells falling around them. The first loss sustained by the unit occurred on a similar occasion, when, on the night of October 13th, a stretcher squad led by Corporal Bryan proceeded to a Battalion headquarters to bring in a case. They were returning, Bryan walking some distance ahead as guide, and had nearly reached the galleries when a shell exploded on the trail and blew the bearers over. The wounded man who had rolled off the stretcher, ran, in spite of his wounds, for shelter, followed by the dazed bearers, one of whom, Pte. Barton, rallied his chums and, supposing the Corporal to be safe inside, led them into the galleries. Finding Corporal Bryan had not come in, Barton accompanied Corporal Beamish back again to seek him. They found him lying at the side of the trail. He had been killed outright. The next day his chums carried him back to Casualty Corner and laid him in the little military cemetery there.

Charlie Bryan was one of the most popular men in the Eleventh and he still lives in the hearts of those who knew him. He had a talent for entertaining others and at many a sing-song or concert long afterwards you would hear the remark, "If only we had Charlie with us now. It took him to get the boys going." With a wide knowledge of the world and a happy lightheartedness, which acted like a tonic upon all, he combined a deep religious faith, and he is remembered by not a few men to whom, when they were in trouble, he gave help and sound advice without a trace of cant or conventionalism. He was a divinity student at St. John's College, Winnipeg, and was well known and well loved by several church communities in the West among whom he had labored.

Clearance from Creighton's at this time was undertaken by the horse ambulances working three at a time and plying back and forth to Pozieres between sunset and sunrise. The drivers and orderlies had no enviable task standing at one end or the other of the Courcellette road for long spells and then, when their turn came to make a trip, jolting over the unspeakable roadway, sticking in the mire, or rocking from side to side like a ship in a gale. Horse ambulances were used not only on this road but also in the neighborhood of Martinpuich whence they cleared the wounded from a First Division R.A.P. back to the Contalmaison road. This work was often carried out under heavy shell fire and the men had some narrow escapes.

From the Dressing Station in Wright's dugout at Pozieres the wounded were cleared to the M.D.S. by the motor ambulances of the Eleventh working in conjunction with those of the Third Ambulance. These cars, working on 24 hour shift, also cleared the wounded brought down by the horse ambulances on the Contalmaison Road.

On October the fifteenth all the First Division bearers were relieved by men of the Eleventh, some of whom now occupied the post in the cellars of the Red Chateau near the centre of the village, while in the early hours of the morning of the 17th the Twelfth Ambulance took over the line work. The relieved squads marched in the early morning light, down to Albert, where, at the Brickfields Camp they joined the men from Casualty Corner and a clean up and a good sleep, the first necessities, were sought without delay. The bearers stayed at this Camp for the next four weeks or so (except when on duty at the M. D. S. or Sick Parade) until their turn came round again for line work.

When the great attack on Regina Trench was made on October 23rd the bearers of the Eleventh were not clearing the R. A. P.'s, but the work of bringing down the wounded from Pozieres by motor was at this time in charge of that Unit. The cars of the three Ambulances 11th, 12th and 13th were employed on this work as well as

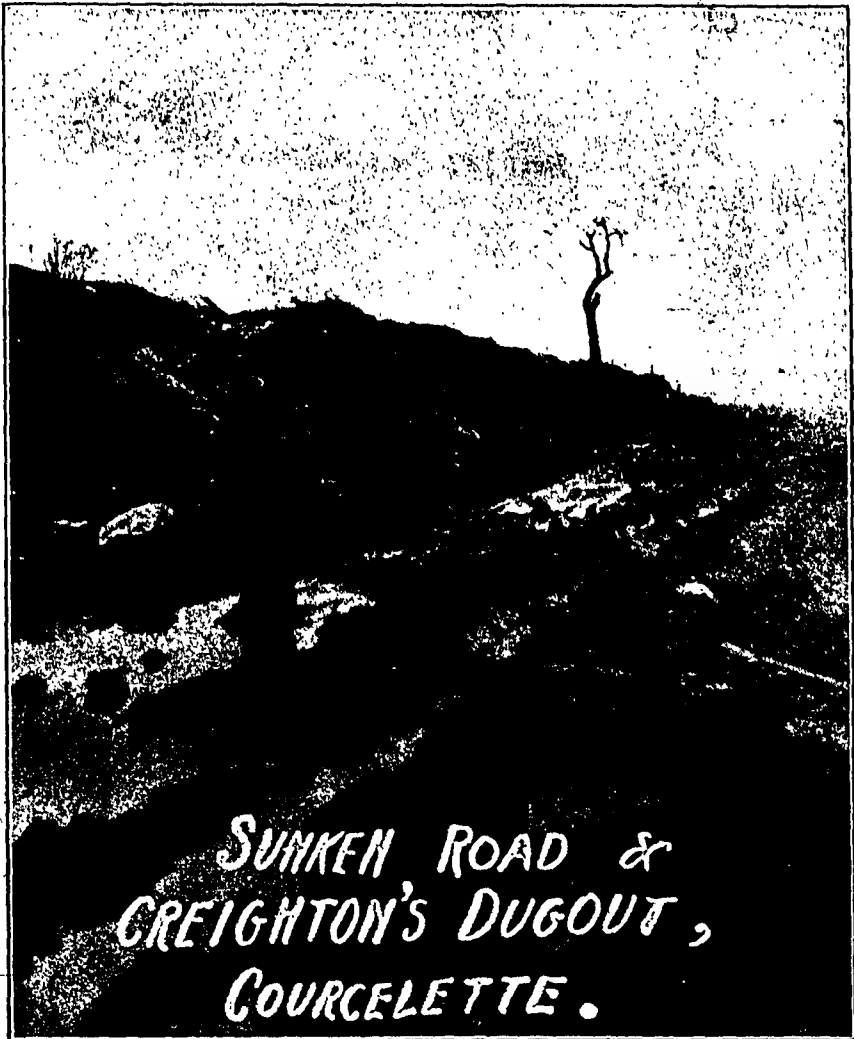
the motor lorry of the 4th Sanitary Section in which walking wounded were cleared to the 13th Field Ambulance, at Tara Hill. The stretcher patients were brought down from the relaying posts in horse ambulances and on the light railway as far as the A. D. S. at the Tramway Crossing, Pozieres. At this point they were transferred, under the supervision of Major Jenkins, D.S.O., the D.A.M.S., to the motor ambulances in which they were conveyed swiftly to the M.D.S. in Albert. As the full cars passed Tara Hill on the way down, Sergt Galea sent up empty cars to Pozieres to replace them, there being no space at the latter place to park the ambulances. In this way the supply of cars was kept up and at no time was there an accumulation of patients at the A.S.D. nor did they have to wait for cars to clear them. This arrangement lasted in force for 48 hours, during which time the men had no rest except what they could snatch between the trips—practically none at all—while on being relieved of this duty they had to proceed, before parking, to the Sick Parade at the North Chimneys and clear two hundred patients to Val de Maison. Thus their shift of work was a good sixty hours in duration. It was a trying experience for the men; they did not spare themselves but saw the job through in a most creditable manner. A large party of bearers had been despatched under Captain Kerr to "stand to" at Tara Hill near La Boisselle and be ready to go to the assistance of the bearers of the other ambulance if necessary. The weather had turned frosty and the men sheltered from the cold wind in an old trench where they gathered around fires kindled in improvised braziers, on which they warmed up pork and beans and made coffee. It was rather good fun, each squad competing with the others in foraging for wood out of the old trenches and from a grove of smashed trees nearby, but it was less of a joke when night fell, the fires died down, and the boys had a taste of what to the Infantryman, was a nightly experience in winter. It was certainly chilly, but nobody was much the worse for it. The attack proved successful, all but the extreme right of Regina Trench being wrested from the enemy, and extra bearers were not required. It was on this occasion that the men first saw long lines of German prisoners, walking back to the cages escorted by smart cavalymen with drawn swords. A strangely assorted crew they were. Tall strapping young fellows with large downy faces and small eyes; men of middle age with seamed brows and grizzled beards, little under sized fellows too, with a lean and hungry look; all sorts and sizes they marched by, some with steel helmets on their heads, some with caps, some bareheaded, but not one with a "pickel haube." Souvenir hunters up the line had seen to that.

On November 6th a working party of the Eleventh was called to dig a length of communication trench in connection with an Aid Post situated in a hot spot on the "Sunken Road" between Courcellette and Martinpuich. The men assembled in the courtyard before the M.D.S. in Albert, whence they were transported in motor charabance along the Bapaume Road to the tramway crossing near Pozieres. Arming themselves with shovels from an engineers dump at the road side they marched along the highway past the old windmill, past several weird looking tanks, past the famous sugar refinery, (then, no more than a heap of brick and scrap iron) through a part of Sugar Trench and down into the Sunken Road. This roadway was no more than a hateful looking ditch of stagnant mud and water that might have been a deserted backwater of the River Styx. It was crossed here and there by broken and half submerged duckboards. Climbing the opposite bank the men came upon the scene of their night's labors. The sergeant of Engineers in charge of the job had the land taped out and he appointed each man to his task "Six feet deep and as wide as your shovels length." He had previously informed the men that the enemy had shelled that very place heavily the night before and as each man received his instructions he "hopped to it," and made the earth fly; nor did he pause for breath until he had dug his piece of trench deep enough to take cover in. Fortunately, however, things were quiet that night and only half a dozen shells came anywhere near the party, although the next night the enemy's shells blew in part of that same trench. The job which had been expected to last all night was finished so quickly that from start to finish the whole job occupied only six hours and the men reached their quarters in time to get a fair night's rest. If that had been a quiet night as regards shelling, it certainly afforded some magnificent firework displays. Signal lights of all colors were going up continually from the front line, while several distant explosions of petrol and ammunition dumps lit up the whole sky with gorgeous, unimaginable hues.

After about four weeks work on the Somme Front, two of the "Cadillac" ambulances were exchanged for two "Fords," to the disgust of Drivers Lloyd and Morris,



who had been assured by their chums that the new cars were to be "Sunbeams." Disgust soon developed into malicious intentions against the "Lizzies" and muttered threats to "fix" them were overheard. But you can't "fix" a "Lizzie." She will buck, gee, haw, back up, balk, stall, puncture or develop any minor and aggravating disorder, but she won't go out of action! As these Fords were immediately required to clear the forward area it was decided to let each driver of the M.T. take a 24 hours



shift and not to allot permanent drivers to them until the work on the Somme Front was finished. On several occasions they were dispatched to the neighborhood of La Sars which lay but a short distance back of the firing line. These rough trips were accomplished without casualties or any mishap beyond having lamps broken or the canvas covering ripped. The Cadillacs were in the meantime continuously employed on 24 hours shifts clearing the sick hospitals.

On November 13th, the Eleventh were called upon for their second spell of stretcher bearing at Courcellette. Some time ere this the aid post in the galleries had been abandoned and all wounded Canadians were brought to the Red Chateau which was designated both A.D.S. and R.A.P., an officer of the Field Ambulance being in attendance as well as the Battalion M.O.'s. Captains Kerr and MacKinnon took alternate duty during the period here described, while the bearers were divided into two parties relieving each other after periods ranging from 24 hours to three days, according to the strenuousness of the duty that fell to them. The Twelfth and Thirteenth Ambulances sent in some squads of bearers during the busiest periods, while they also manned the relay post at Creighton's dugouts.

One need hardly say that the Red Chateau was in ruins. The debris of two stories lay heaped up over the capacious vaulted wine cellars, protecting them from damage by shells which exploded repeatedly upon and around the building. Entrance was made to the vaults by a narrow sloping passage, a kind of irregular stairway, in which about half a dozen stretcher patients could be placed. To the right at the entrance lay a smaller chamber in which the M.O.'s had their quarters. At the far end of the dressing room a doorway led to three vaulted galleries which were fitted with wooden bunks or filled with stretchers upon which the bearers made themselves as comfortable as possible. A fire was built under a broken place in the vaulting, through which some, at any rate, of the smoke made its way, and a succession of amateur cooks essayed to provide hot meals for their comrades, with varying success. The flavor of burnt beans, cafe au brick dust (the result of a shell landing somewhere near the "chimney") and of "gasoline tea" lingered for a long while afterwards in the imagination of the sufferers. It might almost be said that, on busy days, the bearers literally "kept going" on gasoline. One man rather overdid the thing. He failed to distinguish between the water and the gasoline (indeed a pardonable mistake in the circumstances) and poured some of the latter into a bowl upon a lighted primus stove with immediate pyrotechnic results. There were a few anxious moments for those inside the dressing station while the flames were extinguished, indeed it was only by the prompt action of Pte. Campbell that a wounded man escaped a bad burning—but their anxiety was nothing to that of some bearers returning from a trip who vainly tried to get inside, away from Fritz's shells which at the same moment began to land all around the entrance.

For the first few days the bearers had a comparatively easy time, no squad having to make more than two trips a day in, although great things were happening on the Canadian left at Beaumont-Hamel and Beaucourt. The last bit of Regina Trench had been taken from the enemy on the 10th, and no further action was fought by the Canadians until on the 18th they advanced and took "Desire Trench." In the meantime the bearers had to find means of making the time pass as quickly and agreeably as possible. There were card games and round games played, one of which, a kind of development of the "spelling bee" idea, kept the players going for hours. By a kind of grim irony the game was known as "Losing lives." Some few souvenir hunters would go out and explore the nearer ruins in spite of the attentions of the enemy's artillery and the most unsavory condition of these cellars in all of which the bodies of enemy dead still lay.

But the best remembered features of that time were the impromptu concerts and religious services which were led sometimes by the chaplains attached at the dressing station or by the men themselves. A man would be called upon to sing and, no matter whether he had a voice or not, he "did his bit" and was much applauded as the trained vocalist. Some songs such as "Home, Boys, Home" sung by Jack Donnelly, and "He Trod on the Tail o' My Coat," by Mills together with Grigg's recitation "The Moo Cow Moo!" will always be associated with that weird time in the cellars of the Red Chateau. The concerts were usually followed by a short service of hymn singing and prayer. The words of the Padre as he interceded for the men who stood around, for those who were in the trenches, that in life or death they might be worthy of their calling, and for the dear ones far away, held more of real meaning in the circumstances than one had ever realized before. It was the same with the words of the well known hymns. Such petitions as:

"Cover my defenceless head  
With the shadow of Thy Wing."

or

"Keep Thou my feet, I do not ask to see  
The distant scene; one step enough for me."

were sung with a fuller sense of their meaning by men who bore stretchers through Courcelette, and the ever threatening Death lost half his terror when one could sing:

"I fear no foe with Thee at hand to bless—"

"In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me."

The route taken by the bearers when carrying out wounded lay for some 400 yards through the wreckage of the village and through what appeared to have been once an orchard, then across high ground for about a thousand yards to Creighton's dugouts on the road to Pozieres. From this point wheeled stretchers, drawn by horses, were used to clear the Wright's post where, as before, the cases were handed over to the Motor Transport of the three Field Ambulances who transported them speedily to Albert. The Courcelette road had by this time been laid with "corduroy," the majority of the dead that had lain on each side of it had been buried and the enemy had not now such good observation upon it; but it was, nevertheless, a most undesirable place to work. The road was stilled shelled at intervals, the "corduroy" was broken and under water in various places and the Horse Transport men had a very rough time of it. They were soon drenched to the skin from splashing through the mud and water, while for shelter, all they had was a hollow in the bank of the road roofed over with sheet iron, all the dugouts being occupied by the M.O. and his assistants.

The stretcher bearers' carry from the Chateau to Creighton's was a terrible affair at night and, it was by night that a large number of cases had to be evacuated. Weeks of wet weather had turned all the shell torn ground into one great wilderness of slippery mud. Let us accompany a stretcher squad out and back again and witness their task.

A call comes from the sergeant in charge; "Stretcher case! No. 1 squad ready!" The men of No. 1, six of them, (for it took six men to carry out of Courcelette) see that their respirators are properly adjusted at the "alert" position, don their steel helmets, and file out into the dressing-room. "All right fellows, it's pretty quiet just now; off you go." According to a pre arrangement two of them lift the stretcher and climb the slippery stairway into the darkness beyond. And to men whose eyes have just been dazzled by the acetylene lamps inside, the darkness is "darkness that may be felt." When they have reached the pathway clear of the ruins, two more of the squad take a handle apiece and hoist the stretcher onto the four shoulders, one of the remaining men going ahead as guide. A Verrey light illuminates the path a moment and the squad sets out on its hazardous journey, the men feeling their way between shellholes half full of mud, around stumps of trees and bushes, over banks of debris, slipping this way and that, straining their eyes for familiar landmarks; for that ghost of a tree, for that gable end of a cottage sticking up like a fang. Whoosh! Bang! A shell falls and explodes fifty yards away almost unnoticed. Then another, fifteen yards on the other side, and dirt and fragments of bricks rattle on the steel helmets. The squad carry on, for when a bearer has it on his mind that "this man must be got out safely," except for the persistent undercurrent of nervous strain, he consciously feels little more than a sense of irritation as shells burst around. Splash! one of the bearers has slipped into a shellhole. The other three take the strain and the patient is saved a fall. The latter will not hear of any apologies for the shaking he got, but declares that all is being done for him that can be done, that he's "pretty comfortable," but would like to know where he is going and how far it is.

The two free men take the places of two of the carriers and the squad proceeds up the little muddy lane leading to the open country. Struggling along through the deep mudholes they reach the top of the lane and pause a moment to breathe. One can always breathe a little more freely when that haunted village is left behind. The first landmark to be sought is the "Lone Tree", a mere stump without a branch. Then there is a spur of Sugar Trench to cross. This is a bad place and craves wary walking. On they go carefully, painfully, changing over now and then. "Shellhole on the left" shouts the man ahead, and the squad swerves to the right. "Wire," and they step high to avoid a signal wire stretched across the trils. At last the two trees on the edge of the road loom into sight and a minute later the patient is handed over to the M.O. at Creighton's. A few minutes' rest is taken, cigarettes are lighted and the return trip is begun. The men take with them an empty stretcher, a blanket and perhaps some bags of rations and tins of water. Presently the edge of the orchard is reached once more and hearts beat faster as the danger zone is entered. Not that the open country is more than relatively safe, for the trail is often found to be broken by new shellholes. Steps are quickened and each man follows carefully the man ahead of him,

keeping an eye on the rough trail. Bang! bang! bang! Howitzer shells from farther back drone through the air overhead. The noise is deafening. There is a "crump" over in the direction of the Chateau which does not inspire confidence. There is pungent smell of burnt powder in the air, or is it gas? The shapeless ruin of the chateau looms up through the darkness. Can they make that last fifty yards before the next shell lands beside the entrance? There's a short cut leading through a narrow gap and the boys make record time towards it, plunge through piles of old salvage and refuse, through a stench of corruption and carbide waste into the safety of the cellar entrance. As the last man gets under cover; woof! comes a "heavy" nearby, and two or three of the lamps go out. Panting and perspiring the boys push their way back to their quarters, get a hot drink and make themselves as comfortable as possible till their turn should come round again.

After the attack on the morning of the 18th the work was heavy and the wounded had to be carried out by day as well as by night. As soon as the wounded began to come in, a continuous stream of stretcher squads plied between the village and Creighton's until late in the afternoon when the rush abated for awhile. A number of German prisoners were pressed into service as bearers and, under the supervision of "Pug-gy" Emery, Leppard and "Stoney" Thompson, they worked harder than mules and were as tame as pigeons. All day long the procession of walking wounded streamed across the country. Canadians and Germans in some cases helping each other along in the fraternity of suffering.

B Section and half of A were relieved that night by C Section and the rest of A. A number of bearers of the Twelfth Field Ambulance also came on duty at the same time. This party had a very heavy day, for not only did the squads carry out seven or eight stretcher cases apiece, but parties had to go up twice to Regina Trench and bring out wounded men. These trips were made by six squads of six men each in the charge of Serjts. Wickens and Carscallen respectively. The men had to go overland, and, on the second journey, they went in full daylight, under the protection of the white flag. On the latter occasion the men had quite an exciting time. They had advanced across the valley and up the sloping country beyond until, as it seemed, they should be in sight of Regina Trench, but, no sign of it appearing, Joe Smith, their guide became puzzled, then halted. "Where in hell are you leading us?" shouted someone from the rear. (not an irreverent form of question in the circumstances). "I think I'm lost" replied the guide in perfect coolness, "I don't recognize this place at all." Crash! came a heavy shell close by, and thirty six men by a common impulse threw themselves into an abandoned trench. There was nothing for it but to make their way back as quickly as possible towards the chateau and pick up the trail anew. The boys had figured that they would be back with their loads at the chateau before noon at which hour they knew a *strafe* was to be pulled off by our artillery, but it was already midday when they set out afresh, and the martial music of the British guns played them all the way up to Regina Trench. Arrived there, the bulk of the men waited under cover while two from each squad proceeded, carrying their white flags in full view of enemy observers and machine gunners, to bring out the stretcher cases from the dugouts where they lay. By the time the squads were ready to return to Courcellette the enemy artillery had begun their reply and the bearers experienced a very rough trip. Shells exploded around them repeatedly, and what with this danger and the horror of the battlefield scene where, friend and foe heaped together, the dead lay as they had fallen, the men will not soon forget that day's adventure. All arrived safely at the chateau and the stretcher cases were cleared back to Creighton's. At midnight a fatiguing day's work was rewarded by the arrival of the relief party some hours before it was expected.

The next day the ground was frosty and hard and the squads carried on continuously from the first peep of dawn until late in the afternoon. So far, in spite of the heavy shelling and the chances taken, no casualties had occurred to men of the Unit since Corporal Bryan's death. That afternoon, however, one of the squads returning from Creighton's ran into an area of concentrated shell fire which was evidently directed against a battery nearby. One shell exploded close behind the party inflicting a small head wound upon Pte. Hill and severely wounding a bearer of the Twelfth Ambulance who was accompanying the squad. Hill's wound was quickly dressed and he was able to walk with the assistance of a chum, back to the chateau, while the other man who was past all aid, was carried in, but breathed his last ere he entered the chateau. To the regret of all his comrades, it was reported later that Hill had died

in hospital on November 28th after an operation, necessitated by his wound, had been performed upon him.

James Gordon Hill joined the Eleventh from the University of Saskatchewan. He was a student of Law and had given great promise of future success in his chosen calling. He was of a studious disposition without being a bookworm and his love of an argument and his remarkable power as a debater were evidenced in many a spirited discussion among his comrades. He would make his points and maintain his position in argument with spirit, but always good humoredly and without domineering over his opponent. He had made a close study of the question of the education of foreign immigrants in Canada and, in particular, of the customs and language of the Ruthenians. Canada lost a valuable citizen indeed when Gordon Hill made the "great sacrifice."

The Eleventh were finally relieved from Courcellette on Nov. 24th. It was a weary walk down to Albert after a spell of stretcher bearing, but it was worth the weariness to be getting away from the continual nervous strain of it all. Some lucky boys would be able to jump a lorry, others might get a lift in a limber. By twos and threes they came into the M.D.S. in the early morning hours and, after partaking of Smithy's cocoa and sandwiches, sought their welcome, if not downy, couch on the floor of the schoolroom upstairs.

As a recognition of their good work under fire, Pte. Garrioch was promoted to the rank of Lance Corporal, while Staff Sgt. Wickens and Pte. Barton were awarded the Military Medal.

During their work at Courcellette and Albert the men of the Eleventh had learnt what war really was. They had ceased to regard their part in the war as merely an adventure. Here it was grim reality; a test of every ounce of manhood they possessed: a furnace in which artificial standards of life were burned out and where the facts of life and death stood out in their naked reality. However terrible an experience, it was not to be regretted. Nevertheless, it was with a great sense of relief that the men faced the prospect of a change.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE MARCH FROM THE SOMME

It was a cold, wet morning when, on November 26th, the XIth struck camp and packed their wagons for their departure from Albert. By the time the task was finished everybody was wet and mud-plastered after lugging tents, stoves, panniers and the rest of the camp equipment around the "wagon lines swamp." When the men lined up to move off, Lieut.-Colonel McQueen took the opportunity of addressing a few words of commendation to them on the work they had accomplished during the seven weeks that had just passed. Then the Horse Transport began to move off, the horses and mules straining at the tugs in the supreme effort that was necessary to drag the heavily-laden wagons out of the slough. Once a team had got moving the only thing to do was to keep moving until the firm roadway was reached, and for the most part the loads were got out at a species of plunging gallop. Now it happened that behind each wagon was attached a wheeled stretcher loaded with odds and ends of equipment and guided by a poor unfortunate orderly, and in the dash across the wagon lines these men had a very rough time, to the great amusement of their comrades. The Colonel was a man to take his work very seriously and, though as fond of merriment as anyone when off duty, he very rarely exhibited signs of mirth on parade. But when poor old Beattie appeared hanging faithfully on to the end of his wheeled stretcher, plunging, leaping, sliding—everything but falling—as he splashed ankle deep across the miry plain, his countenance expressive of the deepest agony and apprehension, Colonel and Private burst into a spontaneous fit of laughter. "Atta boy Beattie"; "Stay with it," "Don't let it get away on you." Neither did he let it get away, but hung on nobly to the bitter end.

The rain had ceased before 11 o'clock when the Unit moved off and the sky had begun to clear. They were supposed to be marching with the Eleventh Brigade and

long stops had to be made between Albert and Bouzincourt while battalions and their transport got into place in the column of route and the whole moved ahead. It took as long for the Unit to reach Bouzincourt, a distance of three kilometres, as it took them, once they got the bit between their teeth and broke loose from the Brigade, to cover the remaining thirteen kilometres, to Arqueves. But the men found those thirteen kilometres a sore trial. Darkness soon fell and there was but little time for rest at the road side. The long spells of standing about in full equipment that morning and afternoon had tried the men considerably, and late that evening one might have beheld a strange procession of drooping figures trailing along under their packs looking more like a band of weary refugees than a column of route on the march.

The billets at Arqueves were of the airy type to which everyone became thoroughly accustomed before that march from the Somme to the Viny front was over. Anything with four walls had to serve for a night's shelter and the men were lucky if they found straw to lie on. In this instance there was found to be little or none, and as the transport with the blankets aboard had not yet arrived, the men had to sleep on the floor rolled in their greatcoats, where they steadily froze from the feet upwards. It was not until the small hours of the morning that part of the transport turned up and the blankets were distributed.

In the meantime the Horse Transport and wagon orderlies had been having the time of their lives. Their progress, like that of the rest of the Unit, had been a snail's gallop all the afternoon. Unlike the other, however, they had not been able eventually to sprint ahead, but had to keep their place in the long stream of wagons with which the road was filled, until they came to the village of Hedauville. There were two Brigades pulling out that day and their troops and transport were moving in all directions from this place in search of their billets, with the result that as each Unit turned off the main road to the right or left it blocked the way for all the remainder. The drivers of the wagons cursed their luck in being thus held up when they should long before have been at their destination. To make matters worse, darkness came on before the roads became clear. The horses and mules were hungry and tired and the opportunity was taken, during one of the many halts, to remove bits and give the animals their feed. Then, of course, as soon as this had been done a chance came to move ahead once more. The beasts had not finished eating and by the time the bits were replaced and all the wagons got moving the column was strung out at straggling intervals along the road. Then the outfit became broken completely in two parts. The traffic man at a cross-roads let a whole lot of other transport into the midst of the Eleventh's, so that while the rear part of it had to wait, the forepart ploughed onwards and, having taken the turning off the highway, entered a road which swung to the right instead of to the left where Arqueves lay and which very soon degenerated into a mere lane, deep with mud and slush.

The Transport Officer, Captain Stirling, had meanwhile ridden in the direction of Arqueves, but when at length the transport did not appear he rode back and discovered the rear part at least of his charge. He dashed along the crowded roadway on his steed, striking sparks from the stones and scattering confusion behind him. Reining up at each wagon he overtook and yelling "Halt there." "Halt you!" he set each on the right road for Arqueves, where they arrived somewhere around one o'clock in the morning. But the fore part of the transport had already plunged on into the darkness and the unknown. The roadway became unspeakably bad, and what was even more disquieting, the wheels every now and then would bump down into what seemed suspiciously like shell-holes! The men began to get a hunch that everything was not right and began to shout to those ahead, asking in no measured terms "where the heck" they were leading the blanked outfit." Nobody knew. At last it dawned on the Sergeant ahead that he was hopelessly lost. The sound of the guns grew louder, the Verey lights at the front line gleamed more and more brightly and it was clear to all that, instead of leaving the line they were rapidly drawing nearer to it. They began to wonder how long it would be before they would hear the whine of shells coming over, but by the time the men had conjured up a mental picture of a shattered transport, its horses and mules lying around with four legs to the sky and themselves salvaging camp stores under heavy fire or else stretched out cold and stiff on the field of death, a good angel appeared on the scene. Captain Stirling, having at last broken through, rode up and, in stentorian tones, ordered the transport to turn back. "Turn back?" They only wished they could, but the lane was so narrow that to obey the order was a

sheer impossibility. All they could do was to go ahead to the next village and try their luck there. At the outskirts of this place a favourable spot was found and one by one the wagons and ambulances were turned round and headed for the interior of France. All but one wagon. As ill-luck would have it, the driver of this one got a wheel fairly stuck in a shell-hole. It sank deep in the mud and refused to be moved. "Giddap!" Whack! Whack! "Giddap!" "Get out of this, you—" (no printable words can do the situation justice.) The air grew purple with the language used, but all to no purpose. The horses, poor devils, were played right out and just stood panting and drooping in their tracks. There was nothing for it but to unload and stack the camp equipment in the mud. To improve matters, in the midst of it all the Captain's flashlight burned out and the job had to be done in the dark. All ranks were by this time reduced to a state of maudlin profanity and savage irritability. Words failed to meet the demand of the occasion. At last the wagon was pulled out of the hole, turned and loaded up again, and the fact that supper-time was far, far past began to force itself upon the men. The loads were ransacked for something good to eat, but all that could be found were some fancy biscuits, the property of the Sergeant's Mess. Necessity knows no law in such a case, and the biscuits disappeared *à la suite*. Then a good Samaritan appeared in the shape of an Officer of the Royal Flying Corps who provided a bottle of whiskey from his quarters nearby. "Go easy with that stuff," shouted Captain Stirling, "my boys aren't used to it!" "Oh, ain't we," murmured they, *solo voce*, and who shall blame the boys in the circumstances if some of them took long pulls at the bottle, or that, numb with the cold, hungry and tired, they became almost too drowsy to keep their seats for the remainder of the journey. It was not until five in the morning that this weary and travel-stained company trailed into the village of Arqueves and were received once more into the bosom of the Unit.

Three days were spent in this village and the opportunity was seized of pitching the rain-soaked tents in a field with a view to drying them, but the winter air under a grey sky proved quite inadequate for the purpose and the tents, as damp and soggy as ever, were repacked on the wagons. A few Christmas parcels arrived somewhat ahead of time and the contents were discussed around the glowing braziers which did best to warm the cheerless barn billets and render them half-habitable. If any Q.M. recalls that he lost a sack of coke at this place and at this time, and would like to have some information with regard to its disappearance let him apply to either Roe or Best, who would be delighted to enlighten him.

On November 30th, the XIth resumed their northward march, the actual movement occupying the forenoon of each day. The route lay through Doullens to Gezaincourt-Bretal, where the first night was spent. A large number of the boys trudged back to Doullens that evening and enjoyed a civilized supper once more. Successive nights were spent at Wavans, Fillievres and Conteville, while Beugin, the Unit's immediate destination, was reached on December 4th. It was a hard march, especially for men who were so sorely in need of rest after their strenuous work at Albert and Courcellette. Some men were feeling more sick than they would admit but, except in that wild rush up the hill, leading to Conteville at the end of the longest day's march, very few men fell out on the road. It was in this village that some of the boys struck bargains with the villagers and spent the night in real beds with real sheets on them. The scenery along the roads was far more attractive than that left behind in the Somme area. One man, remarking on this fact towards the end of a heavy day's march, incurred the wrath of John Edgar, who, plodding along painfully with no thought but of the longed-for end of the journey, cursed by all his gods (so far as a Presbyterian Theolog. is allowed to do such a thing) the man who could admire landscape in such trying circumstances. Writing of Presbyterians, one is reminded of another incident of that march from the Somme. Three other Theologs. of the same persuasion together with an Anglican student, were by the kindness of the Rev. Father Daniels, C.F., shown the interior of the handsomely decorated church at Fillievres. The Padre explained many interesting details and the Curé, coming on the scene, exhibited also a collection of most beautiful vestments, hangings and other church treasures. The boys were greatly impressed by all they saw, but afterwards in the Curé's comfortable parlor when wine was offered, all stood firm in a courteous refusal of the forsworn alcoholic beverage, to the utter amazement and dismay of the good Father. His face was a study! But Father Daniels, who spoke French fluently, explained the refusal to the satisfaction of all and the situation was relieved. An essence of wild plums,

strong enough to blow their heads off, was substituted for the wine, no questions were asked, scruples were satisfied and a jolly evening was spent around the big open fire.

Such pleasant evenings, passed in the warmth and glow of civilian kitchens and *estaminet* parlors were a welcome attraction and formed a great contrast to the stable and hen-house billets that fell to the boys' lot on that march. The people were more friendly towards the soldiers in these out-of-the-way villages than in those on the edge of the war-zone and they usually gave the boys a hearty welcome to their firesides. Round the little red-hot stove the fellows would gather, sipping French wines or *cafe noir*, chaffing *Mademoiselle*, conversing more staidly with *Madame* (so far as vocabulary served) and getting thoroughly warmed, inside and out, before turning reluctantly into the dark, muddy street and seeking their inhospitable night's lodging. Everyone experienced a great relief when at last it was known that the hardships of the march were over, and that the prospect of a month's "divisional rest" to be spent in the vicinity of two real live towns.



## PART III.

### "THE RIDGE"



#### CHAPTER I.

##### WINTER BEFORE VIMY.

Beugin; village of happy memories; where weary bodies and spirits were refreshed, the horrors of the Somme were forgotten, and the long march became a misty memory. Though the weather was bitter and the barn accommodation poor, the irrepressible spirits of the men soon asserted themselves. The barn became the scene of nightly conflicts where the low walls served for parapets, and socks (another fellow's of course) tightly rolled made first class whizz-bangs. The cold at night time was so intense that for the most part the men were glad to sleep in pairs, man and wife. Murray of C Section, (afterwards killed), had the misfortune to lose his devoted spouse, Gilchrist, who, poor dear, had become voiceless with a terrible cough. She was sent to a Rest Station and meanwhile Murray consented to sleep with Grigg. On Gil's return, however, poor Mrs. Grigg was unfeelingly abandoned.

At this time those good Canadian parcels began to come through and "eats" were abundant, so much so that one man was actually known to refuse a piece of cake! Through the generosity of the officers two estaminets were rented for the daily use of B and C Sections, and the times spent around the stoves and the jolly impromptu evening concerts gave a Bohemian touch to life that made "carrying on" mere bagatelle.

During this period A Section under Capt. Secord were in charge of a sick hospital at the Chateau Vielfort near Houdain. Their time was thus more fully occupied with duties than that of the other sections. Still some pleasant times were spent by the "A" men either in the neighbouring towns or in the billets around the fire where the "old iron pot" was kept ever on the boil, parcels were opened and feasting and jollity were the order of the day.

After the first week in this district, during which a drill or two and fatigues had constituted all the duty for B and C, the men of all three sections were called upon for the work of repairing roads. Thus far they had done everything from taking temperatures to digging trenches, but this was the first taste of navvying. For this work slag from a Bruay mine was used, and many a load had the A.S.C. men to cart and stretcher bearers to shovel. It is significant that despatch rider Winkler thereafter studiously avoided this road in cycling to and from the chateau.

The proximity of the towns of Bruay and Houdain meant much to the boys, for instead of the miserable 15 francs (the fortnightly field allowance at this time) everyone had received a Christmas payment of 65 francs. Frequent feeds of "eggs and cheeps" and the purchasing of souvenirs soon, however, ran away with these fortunes, much of which found its way into the corner jewellery store at Bruay, where the saleswoman was a fascinating mademoiselle who spoke Canadian. Monsieur Canuck who entered for a five franc medallion often emerged with a forty-franc watch! But, what would you? the sight of the girl had been worth it.

At Beugin the old Oliver equipment, the shoulder-chafing straps of which had been so often cursed, was turned in to the Q.M. and replaced by the more comfortable web equipment. Rumours came through of a cosy camp ahead and of a front quiet as a convent. It was affirmed that so tranquil was the Vimy sector that on the occasion of a man's dying there, the unfortunate one received a full military funeral. Also that a special picquet did duty in preventing little French newsboys and chocolate girls from going up to the front line.

Les Quatres Vents, reached by way of Gauchin le Gal and Estree Cauchee on Dec. 21st proved anything but cosy, and the peace which reigned on Vimy was destined, on the coming of the Fourth Division, to be rudely disturbed. B section went up the line at Vimy and some of A took over at Mont St. Eloi: these men had the honor, if not the pleasure, of spending Christmas up the line.

At camp, although much work in the way of fatigues and hospital work had to be done, Colonel McQueen was determined that the Unit's first Christmas should be as bright and enjoyable as possible. That dismal refrigerator known as the recreation room was transformed beyond recognition; and here, the sergeants acting as waiters, was served a meal positively epicurean not to say bacchanalian (or "back in Canada," as one wag remarked)—turkey, plum pudding and champagne! Obviously the war was being won.

The concert on Christmas night was typical of soldiers' singsongs where the programme is made up half an hour beforehand, and, generally speaking, men who can sing, won't, and those who can't, do. Speeches by the Officers, where each got back at the other, proved perhaps as interesting an item as any. It was always enjoyable to the men when the officers "thawed out," for then was dispelled that atmosphere of artificiality and merest feeling of suspicion, which the most model private sometimes felt towards the man to be saluted, the man he was not allowed to address.

The New Year's Eve concert was an improvement on the Christmas one. "C" Section's "Crazy Coons" came out with some good topical numbers, including the inimitable Chinese banter of Bill Straith and MacMahon. Sergeant-Major McArthur, who had come to the Xith from the 3rd Field Ambulance, took the chair and made a happy speech.

A few days after Christmas, working parties of Eleventh men proceeded daily by lorry from the Four Winds, to Hospital Corner between Carency and Souchez. Their task was to remove the earth lying above a range of dilapidated dugouts in the bank of a sunken road, in order that the Engineers might rebuild them for use as a dressing station. A nasty accident which might have cost several men their lives happened on New Year's Day. The men worked in two shifts, and those who were not at the moment working were collected inside out of the wind. Without any warning several tons of earth caved in from the bank bringing down the framework of the dugout among the men below. Only one man, Hall, was hurt, a heavy timber support pinning him down across the hips, while Jordet had only a moment before arisen from a stretcher that was smashed completely by the fall of an iron rail from the roof. By the almost superhuman efforts of Staff-Sgt. Brown, Jordet, Reinhorn and others, working at great risk to themselves, Hall was extricated. Fortunately he escaped with nothing worse than a severe bruising.

Polar weather set in early in January, and the only warm bodies around Camp were those who monopolized the two stoves in the recreation hut, and the hewers of wood, whose cross-cut saw ground out its music all day long. As for the drawers (and thawers) of water, their's was an unenviable task.

The men's bunkhouse (if it can be given even that inelegant title) was a hovel, and a bad hovel at that. Constructed of light lumber, with dark, tattered canvas windows, with a roof under which it was necessary to have innumerable groundsheets by way of umbrellas, this dingy, mudfloored dormitory was always recalled by the men as one of their most dismal memories. The individual who was hardy enough to take off his pants, during the cold spell, was considered to have the blood of a fish, while nothing short of tucking boots into bed with one kept those articles from freezing stiff.

Les Quatres Vents! Art thou not rightly named the Four Winds?

Of course the winter was unusually severe; the French people said it was the worst for forty years, which could be well believed. Moreover the bunks were of the two-by-four, plus rabbit-wire variety, in which it was next to impossible, to "double up", although in point of fact some men contrived to do so,—Bill Straith and MacMahon, for instance, Henry and D. J. Fraser, Gilchrist and Murray. Under these Arctic conditions the evening task of "reading your shirt," (more commonly known as "lousing" or "crumbing up") became almost out of the question, and, as one man put it, we had simply to "let 'em browse."

A good deal of sickness occurred in the unit at this time; men from all sections being evacuated. Captain McMillan the popular adjutant, went down the line with muscular rheumatism. B section were unfortunate in losing Corporal Beamish, who

had done such excellent work at Courcellette, a loss which the whole unit felt. Major Moshier and Capt. Lindsay were also quite sick during this spell of severe weather.

Meanwhile there was scarcely any time from New Year to April when Eleventh men were not up the line—at Cabaret Rouge A.D.S., Valley Aid Post on the Ridge, the R.A.P.'s known as the Beehive and the Bivouac, (across the Zouave Valley from Wortley Trench), and the post known as Hospital Corner, beyond Carency, up to which point came the motor ambulances. The wounded were cleared from Cabaret Rouge to Hospital Corner after sundown by the Horse Ambulance, the men of the Horse Transport taking turns on duty. The route taken was by the way of Souchez and that dreaded shell-torn corner on the Bethune-Arras road, which lay under direct observation of the enemy. On moonlight nights when snow lay on the ground the "old bus" must have proved a most conspicuous target. It was however, allowed to pass unharmed on its errand of mercy. Some nights as many as four and five trips were made.

Stretcherbearing at Vimy differed from that at Ypres and the Somme by the fact that, due to the splendid observation possessed by the enemy, the bearers had always to keep to the communication trenches. These narrow, labyrinthine alleys were terribly inconvenient when it came to bearing a stretcher case through them. On account of the many turnings and corners progress was very slow and most trying alike for bearers and patients. The practice of carrying through trench 130 to Cabaret Rouge was soon abandoned, B Section being responsible for blazing (in that term may be used of ground which literally had been, and was being, blazed by shell-fire) an overland trail to the Cabaret Rouge A.D.S.

In addition to shell fire, there was the further danger that squads bearing overland from the Valley Aid Post were under observation of the enemy. So were they when, just before Vimy, the entrance to Wortley Trench became so badly blown in by shell fire that an overland route was used from the Ridge to the Central and Micmac stations. Even when Wortley Trench was in use the carry from Rugby Durrp to Central was made along the Arras Road in full view of the enemy, for the Arras Alley trench was knee deep with water. It was the experience of the Eleventh that on none of these occasions did the enemy resort to sniping. A new arrival, Musgrove, was hit, but this was at night and probably by a machine gun bullet.

The line work during January and February was on the whole not heavy, though far from dull. Nothing particularly abnormal in the matter of "strafes" had occurred around Christmas time, but on January 3rd, the enemy put over a heavy bombardment as if preparatory to an attack. In the vicinity of the Valley Aid Post calls for help came from different parts of the Ridge and promptly the boys of B section responded, Cooney and Pincock doing good work. Many casualties occurred at the well in the valley, including the 73rd Battalion's water detail, whose right carotid artery was pierced by a piece of shrapnel. J. K. Mulloy, by digital pressure, did his utmost to save the life, but in vain. It was due to the rush of stretcherbearing to the A.D.S., on this occasion that the overland route to Cabaret Rouge was discovered.

Noteworthy too was the work of Singleton and Hanson about this time. While they were returning from the A.D.S. with rations heavy shelling commenced, and hearing a cry for help from a wounded man they dressed and carried him into the shelter of a dugout. When the firing had somewhat subsided, Singleton and Hanson sought their own dugout, only to find that shell-fire had rearranged its architecture and formed a picturesque grotto at the entrance. Apprehensive as to the safety of their comrades the two men called down through an aperture and were overjoyed to hear voices announcing that all was well.

This original dugout for bearers at the Valley Aid Post had a distinct Venetian touch in possessing a waterway flooring, navigable only in rubber boots. In consequence all property had to be hung upon the wall, while spare time was spent in constructing a floor above the hightide mark. The discrimination of the enemy in destroying such a place was highly commendable. The ever-thoughtful Captain Kerr now went househunting on the Ridge with the result that this caved-in hovel was given up for a veritable town house.

Towards the end of February preparations began to be made for a divisional raid with gas. All available squads went up the line and with them additional supplies in the way of stretchers, dressings, etc. Passing a company of infantrymen seated on the Carency Road, the stretcher bearers caught the remark, "You're a bunch of bloody pessimists." A more eloquent expression at once of the infantryman's incorrigibility and heroic contempt it would be difficult to imagine.

At about 2.30 on the morning of March 1st, the day finally fixed for the raid, in pitch darkness, all C's squads went up from the Cabaret Rouge A.D.S. to the Ridge and were located in a deep mine shaft. Shortly after the enemy began to pour shells into the poor old Valley, and the noise of the bombardment drowned the clatter of our Lewis and Stokes guns, which from the shaft had sounded like the quack-quack-quacking of infuriated giant ducks.

It was at this time that Musgrove, then Corporal, sitting at the entrance of a crowded dugout, had a piece of shrapnel pierce his steel helmet and enter his forehead. Although squads bore across the Valley practically all day this proved to be the Eleventh's only casualty. For performing valuable services while wounded Corp. Musgrove was afterwards awarded the M.M. Section B did good work in relaying casualties from Cabaret Rouge while "A" had their hands full at the M. D. S.

It is well known that this divisional raid, unlike the smaller ones with which the enemy had been harassed all winter, was no great success. An officer who came up the shaft from the front line soon after the attack said that he had never seen the enemy so lively; he believed that oxygen had been pumped over by mistake! "The flash of their rifle fire," said he, "was like the sudden lighting up of a seaside promenade."

A word or two may not be out of place here on the subject of coming down from the Line. The distance from the Zouave Valley to the Four Winds Camp was about 6 or 7 miles,—through the trenches out on to the road above Hospital Corner. The stretcherbearer might be feeling very dirty, very shoulder sore and exhausted, but it was with a light heart that he increased the distance between himself and the Line. Gratifying also was it for him to hear grow fainter and fainter, the vicious sound of high explosives—like the crash of a piano hurled from a sixth-storey window into a courtyard.

Once away from the hopeless desolation which reigned in the trenches he soon came upon the ordinary daily life of rural France. Just beyond shell shattered Carancy, whose sores were ointmented with snow during the most of the winter of 1916, could have been seen an old shepherd leading his flock; while further on, old Frenchmen or boys, with creaking implements and slumberous naps, were busy with the Spring plowing. Here and there the Winter wheat upshooting gave the ground a lawnlike appearance, affording pleasure to eyes whose outlook for days had been mud, mud, mud, relieved only by wire, tins and shell holes.

Then, on reaching camp, the weary stretcher bearer, a picturesque, mudstained, helmetted object, would be able to take his mess tin round to the cookhouse for a glorious feed of fresh meat. On the morrow he could enjoy the luxury of a bath and a change of underwear—not his own, of course, but garments that had "been the rounds." Some of the clothing looked as if it had been in the retreat from Mons, and he was lucky who obtained an undershirt that overlapped the chest, or a shirt not sprinkled with things like caraway seeds, which however, did not belong to the vegetable kingdom.

At the Main Dressing Station, Les Quatre Vents, the hospital huts continued full. B section took over up the road at Estree Cauchee, where special cases, such as mumps and measles were sent for treatment. The time was a busy one for all. The Horse Transport worked under great difficulties, contending as they did with the cold weather, slippery roads and poor quarters. The M.T.'s, as their engines froze, remarked disgustedly with chattering teeth, "And they call this 'Sunny France.'" Captain Grant, the dentist, carrying on hour by hour with icy instruments cursed the Kaiser and hardtack alternately.

Working parties from the Unit had been going up almost daily to Hospital Corner on dugout construction, when on March 7th, "every available man" was marshalled for the construction of the new dressing station at the Chateau de la Haie, near Villers-au-bois. The weather continued to be bitter and often the work of erecting the huts was carried on in a blizzard. Most of this work fell to C section, B section being up the line, and A running the hospital. Under the direction of the engineers those five Nissen Huts quickly took shape, faster in fact than "Smithy," chief tinsmith, could put on the roofing.

Although rumors of something about to happen were in the air, and of which the building of the dressing station was indicative, it may be doubted whether any of those amateur builders divined to what magnificent use those same five Nissen huts were about to be put in connection with the Vimy affair, or what a pleasant summer-time would afterwards be spent by the Unit at the Chateau Camp. By the end of March the Xith had taken possession of the new home their men had built.

When the greater part of the work on the building of the La Hnle Hospital was completed parties of men were sent up to the vicinity of Vimy Ridge to assist in the construction of dressing stations, relay posts, light railways, and in other ways to make preparations for the big attack. In these tasks they co-operated with men of the Thirtieth Field Ambulance. Finishing touches were put to Gilday's Post between Villers-au-Bois and Berthionval Wood, while the construction of the railway spur to that point from the main line of the light railway near Point C and the relay post near to Rugby Dump on the Arras-Bethune Road, known as "Mic-Mac," were completed at this time. Only the non-arrival of the necessary switch and additional rails prevented the completion also of the branch line to Mic-Mac dugout. Had this line been laid, the bearers would have been saved much heavy work on April 9th and the days following.

During the month of March the work of stretcher-bearing behind Vimy Ridge became much more serious business than it had formerly been, and when, after a spell off in the earlier part of the month, the Eleventh bearers again went up to the Aid Posts they found things decidedly lively. C. Section were the first to go in and they had heavy work to do, especially in the week or two preceding the great attack. The digging of the "jumping off" trench occasioned a steady inflow of casualties nightly and the bearer squads had their hands very full.

The carry from Blue Bull Tunnel, where the R.A.P. was now established, down the Ridge and across the Valley, became more than usually dangerous, for the enemy, fearful of something about to happen, pounded the western slope of the Ridge almost continuously, and even the trip of 150 yards across the Valley from the post named "the Bivouac" became a venture that no one cared much about making. Infantrymen used to cross to Wortley Trench at the double and openly professed their preference for the front line.

With a stretcher case, running was, of course, out of the question, but the fact of the stretcher on the shoulder and the necessity of avoiding jar to the patient, provided just that preoccupation necessary to reduce fear, and developed a sense of self-possession quite distinct from fatalism. Indeed the anticipation of a trip was nearly always worse than the realization. Several factors appear to have contributed to the equanimity of the bearer. For one thing it was impossible either to duck or scoot at the sound of an approaching shell, so that emotional control was simplified. The presence, too, of the helpless patient, the rhythmical swing of the moving squad, and the sense of a collective spirit developed from the very nearness of bearers and patient, all helped to eliminate concern for personal safety and to encourage steadiness.

The patients handled were naturally of every variety, but they were all invariably cheerful, considerate, humorous, incorrigible. One little Irishman, with serious head injuries and the sight of one eye destroyed, sang out to the bearers—"It's a good thing Fritz got me in the head, you know. It's *solid ivory*!" Another man (of the 54th Batt.) who also had been hit in the head while working on the "jumping off trench" provided a regular evening's entertainment for the bearers in the Bivouac R.A.P. While they were dressing his wounds and attending to his bodily comfort he kept up a humorous running comment on the artillery duel that was proceeding without. "There's William speaking!" he exclaimed as a "heavy" crashed into the valley. Then, as our sacrifice battery volleyed forth, "There's George! 'atta boy, George! George is talking now. William's in a shell hole." "Now listen," he continued, "Willie's going to slide over a Williegram." Sure enough William did. It was uncanny. This man seemed to be directing the very fire of both sides. As his sodden pants were removed and his nether limbs massaged into warmth and feeling he grew sentimental, saying the attention reminded him of the way his wife used to look after him, and one of the boys got a kiss on the cheek as reward for his services. The shelling grew fiercer and "heavies" landed close to the little tin bivouac which was little more than rain-proof. The bearers and patients therefore repaired to the shelter of the M.O.'s dugout, none too soon, as it happened, for a few minutes later a shell wrecked the entrance to the Bivouac.

When the bombardment subsided the patient was taken across the Valley as a walking case. His pants were too wet to be replaced, so the boys clad him in breeches of sandbagging held together and supported by sundry shell dressings wrapped round and round the legs and carried over his shoulders as braces. This outfit together with the bandages on his head caused him to resemble nothing so much as a pierrot. Thus he made his way to Wortley Trench, still clutching his "tin lid" with the machine gun bullet hole in it, to the A.D.S. and so to Blighty.

Mention must here be made of two excellent concerts given to the XIth in the old recreation hut at Les Quatre Vents, by the Y.M.C.A. concert party. Some of the members of that troupe afterwards appeared in the 4th Div. Concert Party, but the "lady" had not then arrived. Nor must reference be omitted to the musical programme given to the patients and staff by the bands of the 87th and 75th Battalions. Life at the Four Winds (so apt a name) was deadly dull at times, but assuredly it would have been more so, but for these much appreciated entertainments.

Nor would this record be complete without recalling that admirable cinema run by the Chaplain Service at Camblain L'Abbe, where many a winter's evening was laughed away and the "rotten old war" forgotten in enjoyment of "Charlot", as the French *gamins* called the famous comedian. Chaplin may have been funny, but more amusing still at these times were the infantrymen's running and brilliant comments. The villain on the screen became somehow associated with the enemy in the trenches, whence many of the audience had just come. Thus, as the *rogue* proceeded with his "dirty work," one would say, "Chuck a bomb at him;" or, "Fall in two men and shove him in the clink." Or again, "Blow away, guy, you're like a disease." This to the villain. On the other hand the hero was as vigorously encouraged—"Atta boy; go on, kid, we're all with you." Your ambulance man, who of all branches of the service was given the most concrete reasons for appreciating the infantryman, felt even his admiration glowing in respect of these brave hearts.

The loss of Major Fortin, who left on March 27th for England and afterwards returned to Canada, was a matter of regret to all and especially to C section. Major Fortin, with his experience gained earlier in the war, and his splendid organizing abilities proved invaluable in the training and breaking in of the XIth to its work. The fact that in the green days of the 4th Division the XIth were so much entrusted with Main Dressing Stations was due in no small measure to the skill and experience of the indefatigable major, who worked often night and day to insure that the dressing of the wounded should be done as carefully and as expeditiously as possible.

Of trips to Barlin, for wood, of picquet duty, of the sentries at the cross roads who wanted to know who everybody was, ("Halt! who are you?"); of eggs and chips at Estree Cauchee (not to mention Aubigny, for it was "out of bounds"), of ammunition beginning to line the road, of visits to the old Gas Chamber at Maisnil Bouche for testing masks, of sweeping the road and scrubbing the floor in preparation for the visit of Sir Douglas Haig (who in his s'aff car thoughtlessly whizzed past!) and of the thrilling adventures of "Dad's" Bradley and Fletcher with the horse ambulance in "No Man's Land"—much might be written; but the Four Winds is not a place to dwell upon—or dwell at for that matter, and one turns gladly as the Unit did, to fresh fields and pastures new.

## CHAPTER II.

### VIMY

All through the memorable Winter of 1916 the Canadian Corps had worked, fought and endured with one definite object always before them—the capture of Vimy Ridge. During those winter months something was learned of the history of the heights, how the valiant French had stormed them at a tremendous cost in the fierce fighting of 1915, how the British, lengthening their line frontage in the Winter of the same year, held this strong position lightly and had been driven back by the massed enemy to the furthest edge of the Ridge. Arriving on the scene in December the Fourth Division had taken over the trenches on the northern extremity of the Vimy Heights from the First Division, the Third being on their right and the Second across the Souchez Valley towards Colonne on their left. Thus the Fourth held the steepest part of the Ridge from December until March. (For the attack on April 9th the Fourth Division held a longer front here while the Third, Second and First Divisions, in the order named, extended on their right to the neighbourhood of Ecurie and Roc-lincourt). Through the Winter the battalions sat in those trenches, occupying the narrow strip of ground along the edge of the plateau, by possession of which Canada claimed part ownership in the famous Ridge. To the veriest tyro in the strategy of war it was plain that our position was precarious and oppositely the enemy seemed equally secure, dominating the Canadian lines and the whole area in the immediate rear.

What the Infantryman thought and felt on this point can only be accepted as hearsay, but the Ambulance stretcher-bearers were very soon made aware that the so-called

shelter afforded by the Ridge was a myth. To add to the pre-occupation of the loaded bearers sliding down the Ridge and mushing across the valley, the enemy's favourite diversion, when times were quiet, was to trundle "Minnies" down the slopes and to pound the tiers of dug-outs and the Valley with a choice variety of explosives. It was always with relief that the squads drew clear of the Ridge slopes and fell into an easier gait as they drew nearer Cabaret Rouge. Small wonder that the Infantry and Stretcher-bearers grow "windy" on those necessary strolls across the open Valley and they changed its name among themselves from "Zouave" commemorating the storming of the heights by the French, to "Death Valley," mindful of many a Canadian who perished there in those later days. But the dangers and hardships of those winter months on the Ridge slopes were made tolerable by the certain knowledge that some day, when the time was ripe, the Olympians who ordain such things would speak the word and the situation would be changed—with the Maple Leaf boys on the top-side looking down. Raids and forays were regularly "pulled off" until there were those who possessed the full secrets of the enemy's maze of trenches and of his strong defence system.

As the Spring drew nearer all thoughts and whisperings turned upon the subject of the "Big Drive" and rumour confidently imparted secret information as to dates and hours, varying within the limits of a whole month. The calendar in due time brought the Spring season but the weather-man forgot the change and March with its blustering winds brought up snow-storms and heavy frosts. With April came the thaws and attendant rains, making the forward lines barely tenable. Good communication trenches flooded and began to crumble and cave in with the thaws and down-pours, and the shell-ploughed Valley became a clayey morass through which bearers plodded and paddled, skidded or "doubled," according to the state of the trail down slope and through hollow. The enemy shelling growing more intense and frequent, (yet still a feeble retaliation for the storms of shells to which he was subjected daily) completed the wreck of the trenches which the weather had commenced. Soon the communication trenches became impassable for loaded stretcher parties and "cases" were "toted" overland in daylight and moonlight by way of the duck-walk from the little Cemetery beside Liverpool-Dump to the "observation tree" on the Arras Road, and so to Micmac or Central Post. The carry across the heavily shelled Valley became a dreaded night-mare to those who were constantly called on to traverse it in that first April week. The stretcher-bearers, with everyone else on the Ridge, were facing the onset of the great storm.

The carrying parties in the Valley were not alone in experiencing the difficulties of clearing the wounded during that busy time. Relaying squads pushing their loaded trucks from Micmac and Central Post back along the light railway to Gilday's encountered lines of ammunition and supply trains drawn by the ubiquitous mule. "Side tracking," "switching" and "carrying around" made relaying trips strenuous labour and tedious. Everywhere down the line, from the Arras Road back by Berthonval Wood to Point C and Gilday's, guns of every calibre were massed and parked. It became a nerve-testing experience to run the gauntlet of their fire during the bombardments which were regular events of those days. It did not inspire confidence to notice the wicked mouth of an eighteen pounder grinning through its camouflage and laid directly across the track so that one guessed the shell would make a neat amputation of both legs if he chanced to be crossing its line when it fired. Not without trepidation did the Stretcher-bearer stop his loaded truck and make a detour to ask the gunner not to fire until he was past; the request was received good-naturedly and was always granted.

Nor were the Artillery the only busy people. True to the Canadian reputation for thorough organization, the Engineers and Labour Battalions had been hard worked in bringing up the water supply as near as might be to the front line, in laying light railways and maintaining them through hostile shelling (no easy task) and in completing strong posts and redoubts, which were also to play their part on the coming day.

With the other branches of the Division the XIth Field Ambulance had been active in its preparation for the great attack. The last touches were put upon the Main Dressing Station at the Chateau de la Haie and the forward posts at Gilday's and Micmac. The whole system of posts was planned to handle the large number of casualties to be expected from a great advance and every arrangement which foresight could suggest was carried out in order to facilitate the evacuation of the wounded.

But while the labours of the Services have been recorded, the Infantry have not been forgotten. During the weeks preceding the attack they did much to prepare the way for the success which they gained later on. For weeks battalions had been training and drilling and in the back areas it was a daily event to see a practice attack being carried out over a supposed system of trenches exactly representing the enemy's defences and denoted in these manoeuvres by tape-lines or shallow ditches. In the line, battalions had a very trying time during the heavy artillery strafes by which the enemy replied to our bombardments. In addition to holding the line, whole companies of Infantrymen were sent out into No-Man's-Land every night for weeks to dig the "jumping-off trench" which was to conceal our first wave until the appointed moment for the advance. These working parties carried on their labours in the moonlight nights in spite of shelling, bombing and sniping; but they suffered many casualties, mostly severe wounds, and the XIth bearers carried out many a good man who had done his share in the capture of the Ridge before ever a company went "over the bags."

Thus it was that "C" Section bearers were more than ready to get clear of the Valley when "A" Section boys arrived to relieve them on Good Friday for a forty-eight hour rest. Before they went out they helped to move supplies and equipment from the old posts to the huge dressing stations which were now completed in the three tunnels—Vincent, Tottenham and Cavalier. These new quarters were absolutely secure and looked vast enough for all needs, but they proved none too roomy for the casualties which crowded them on the first day of the attack. These three tunnels, with others along the Ridge, had been under construction very many months and almost insuperable difficulties had to be overcome before the Engineers could place them in readiness for occupation and use. The tunnel-ways up the Ridge slope to the front line and supports were used for weeks by the Infantry, but the extension of Tottenham Tunnel under the Valley was still under construction when some of the XIth men made the first trip through the entire length with a loaded stretcher during the week before Easter.

Leaving "A" Section to work the line, "C" Section boys made their way to Point "C", where it had been arranged they should rest. It was two weeks since they had gone to the advanced posts and this was the first gathering after a trying tour. Jaded spirits speedily revived under the stimulus of good company. A cheery camaraderie, which had carried the boys through other hard times, came out now, and sparkling wit and banter contrived to make them forget the strenuous saddening days behind them, heartening them for the work which was still to do. The arrival of a huge mail with letters from Canada gave the tonic of which all stood in some need, and parcels provided the eatables for a real Easter celebration. But spirits dropped again to zero when the Sergeant called for a working party. The choice in such circumstances could not be arbitrarily settled and the selection was decided by the more sporting method of a lottery. The lucky winners had scarcely ceased to congratulate themselves when a second party was called for, to go up at night. As one disappointed youth remarked, the rest was "shot to pieces."

Memories of that Easter Eve working party remain fresh even now when far merrier experiences have faded out of memory. The business was to alter a route overland by digging up the duck walks and laying them in the trench running parallel fifty yards distant. A bright moon aided the work of the party at first, but later it proved their undoing. To keep their nerves to the proper working-party pitch, a gun in the battery just behind arranged a premature burst and showered the party with ironware intended for the enemy, causing a swift scattering movement towards the trench. Reassured that the pleasantries would not be repeated, the party resumed work, but from that time until the close of the job, the enemy harassed them with his friendly attentions. Scattered rounds from machine guns at chosen moments and a few shells at nicely-timed intervals caused "hasty dispersals" and impeded progress on a job which everyone, for once, wished to see done in record time. Gathering up the party each time from sundry funk holes and gun pits was the lot of the Lance-corporal in charge, but once at least he found half the party without difficulty—their heads and shoulders wedged under a culvert which might comfortably have sheltered two whole carcasses. Work finished, the final exit of this troupe was made with indecent haste under the encouragement of a real "strafe" of whizzbangs and gas shells. The rout proved that Nature's protection against being gassed is instinctively used in preference to the issued equipment.



Easter Sunday was just such a day as ladies back in Canada would welcome for their millinery show—little thinking what a show Canadian men were facing on that same day. The sun shone brightly and warmly and the Ambulance boys lay out on the banks besides the roadway sunning themselves and snoozing, or taking a quiet, detached interest in the great upheavals which enemy long-range shells were causing in the Village of St. Eloi, a mile or so behind them. Around Gilday's post the boys of "B" Section were enjoying the Spring day in a similar way, and here, too, the Colonel came to give final instructions and to put last touches to the scheme for to-morrow's work. Towards evening the Sections moved up to their allotted posts—"A" Section squads to Cavalier tunnel, "B" squads to Tottenham and "C" squads to Vincent tunnel.

In each of these tunnels a passage branched off leading to an underground chamber designed and fitted up as a Dressing Station and here the Battalion Medical Officer had established himself with his dressers. Here, too, the bearers settled themselves for a snatch of sleep such as an old campaigner can manage under any circumstances. Outside in the passage-ways the Infantry began to assemble and there could be studied the deep emotions which sweep over men in such moments, of which war correspondents have written in columns of print. Lines of men thronged the length of the tunnels. Some crouched against the wet clay and smoked incessantly, others slept, huddled down beside a chum. Some talked in low, intense tones, and a few moved restlessly to and fro in the crowd around them.



Officers passed among the men with a word or two of instruction and with frequent glances at wrist watches. Soon after midnight orders were passed along. The platoons commenced to file up the sloping galleries to deploy along their front into battle order. Everywhere along the whole front men awaited the fateful zero hour.

An hour before sunrise the storm burst. The roar of the opening barrage came through the galleries to the waiting bearers as a vast echo borne into the depths of the Ridge. The tremendous upheavals overhead were known only by the vibrations of the pent up atmosphere in these under-ground chambers. But to those bearers in the trench across the Valley at MicMac was granted a memorable scene at this hour. From their vantage point on the opposite slope the full effect of the Artillery prelude could be seen in the bursting shells and shrapnel and in the innumerable columns of earth, debris and smoke thrown high into the air, while the thunder of the guns on all sides, the shriek of shells overhead and the explosions on the enemy trenches were almost too deafening to endure. The light of dawn served to silhouette the forms of the Infantrymen as they followed the slowly moving barrage, and the frantic firework display ascending from the enemy lines illuminated the field of battle.

The first stretcher party arrived at MicMac before the barrage opened, bringing in a man wounded before his battalion went over the top. By this time the enemy

was retaliating heavily and the shelling in the Valley was too severe for the bearers to bring out cases from the tunnels. But by eight o'clock the dressing rooms were crowded and when the shelling had become lighter the bearers set out across the Valley. It was expected that by this time the crest of the Ridge would have been cleared of the enemy so that the shower of machine gun bullets which struck around the stretcher parties as they carried up the opposite slope came as a surprise. Later it appeared that a strong post which had been overlooked by the mopping-up parties, was still held by the enemy who fought their machine guns steadily until the post was stormed by a new assault. From this post was caused the only casualty sustained by the Xith during the whole advance. A squad of "A" bearers having ascended from the trench to take the overland trail, a bullet inflicted a nasty wound in Neilson's hip. Two boys helped him back to the Aid Post, a new man was called up, and they rejoined their comrade who had waited in the cover of a shell-hole beside the stretcher case.

By this time the bearers were working steadily. From the Arras Road stretcher squads could be seen, one closely following another, trudging across the Valley from the three tunnels, all converging on the relay post at Micmac. Time after time through the long day, each squad set out from the tunnels, hoping to find the crowd of cases diminished on their return, yet every time returning to find all available space filled. It was with keen disappointment that they saw their exertions making no apparent decrease in the numbers. Out on the trail one figure was frequently to be met. Captain Kerr, who was in charge of the bearers, made regular visits to the three tunnels along the Valley, always with a word of encouragement and ever careful for the welfare of the boys. His was the inspiring spirit among them: his cheery nod and smile as he passed a squad on the trail, and his own disregard of danger were worth a great deal throughout that arduous day. No break was made for food or rest and the boys took what food they could find, bully or biscuits, and hot tea served from a post which had been made in Wortley trench for the relief of walking wounded.

Towards the end of that day each squad had made ten or twelve trips over the trails to Micmac, distant a mile or more from the tunnel posts. The men began to feel fatigued, hungry and in need of sleep. Of any feeling other than the physical, the bearers were unaware. Each return to the battalion posts showed there was as great, if not a greater, number of cases still to be carried out. There yet seemed no hope of rest ahead—the word was "carry on;" another trip was made all round and returning the boys felt they must rest. But the next round was carried and again the next, the boys making a call each time upon their reserve strength. So they continued until midnight. By that time sheer exhaustion could no longer be thrust off and some sought a corner in the tunnels and huddling down, slept heavily through all noise and movement around them. A few boys still carried on doggedly without rest, and after two hours or so they were joined by those who had slept. The second day commenced with from fourteen to seventeen round trips to the credit of each squad at day-break.

The lot of all in the field that day was ameliorated by the prevalence of fair weather, while in the sky above the Valley slopes, a lark soared and sang his wonderful rippling melodies, ringing clear above the din of battle, cheering the hearts of all who heard him.

At Micmac the Stretcher-bearers had had fully as strenuous a day as those at the Valley posts. Very early in the day the inside accommodation for cases was crowded and the squads carrying in had to change their route and bring their burdens across Rugby Dump so that the wounded might be sheltered in the communication trench leading from the post toward the light railroad. Here at Micmac the dressings of the wounded were re-examined. The men were fed and cared for by the bearers while they awaited the train which was to carry them to the rear. By eleven a.m. when the train got through from Dinkysville, Micmac and its communication trenches were crowded. The work of loading was speedily under way, each case being carried down the trench and up overland about two hundred yards to the narrow gauge railway. There they were loaded on to trucks drawn by small gasoline engines, which took them back down the two and a half miles of track to Gilday's collecting post below St. Eloi, on the road to Villers. Through the day the wounded were cleared from Micmac as fast as trains could be got through, yet it was late at night before clearances from this post caught up with the inrush of wounded from the tunnels.

Outside in Wortley trench the walking wounded passed Micmac in little crowds, making their way out slowly by this trench or along Central Trench to the collecting

posts for walking wounded at Point "C." Among these parties of muddy, bandaged men the lightly wounded gave assistance to the more seriously injured, and nowhere that day was to be seen a finer expression of the spirit of brotherhood pervading the army than in those groups of broken, weary men. Along their way out the little posts of the Y.M.C.A. gave nourishment and needed aid, and these kindly attentions did much to relieve and cheer the lot of the walking wounded.

Clearing work went on at Micmac through the night under difficulties. The night scene there remains impressed upon the memory. A train has pulled up to Micmac and every available man, including Captain Stirling, who directed the work at the post, is soon at work carrying stretcher cases down to the loading point, and returning time and again. There Colonel McQueen and Major Jenkins (the D.D.M.S.), who are visiting the post, get to work and assist in loading the high trucks, while the train crew also bears a hand. In the darkness officer and private are indistinguishable and though curt language may be thrown at "stars" unwittingly, no orders or encouragement are needed there where everyone is exerting every ounce of effort to speed evacuation. A mule train coming down from Rugby Dump in the darkness is barely able to brake in time to avoid a collision with the waiting train and in the melee of mules a driver is badly thrown and mauled. In a few minutes he is picked up, dressed and hoisted aboard the departing train for a quick trip to hospital.

At Micmac, as with the bearers at the Valley posts, fatigue had been resolutely fought off for hours. Some who worked through the midnight hours carried on as mere automatons, barely conscious of their doings or of their surroundings. At two o'clock, when the incoming cases from the Valley were few and no trains could be expected, most of the boys at Micmac were able to snatch an hour or two of sleep in an odd corner of the dug-out before commencing another day.

The transportation of the wounded from Gilday's post was carried on by the XIth ambulances, five Cadillac Cars and two Fords. Travelling was bad for both drivers and wounded, for the stormy weather and the continuous stream of heavy traffic in the week past had turned good roads into deeply mired tracks with numerous sloughs of mud. With these road conditions, days of driving through traffic (which now appeared on all roads leading to the Ridge) became a severe nerve test. The M.T. men had their troubles, as when the sunken roads became blocked with drifts during the recent storm, but they worked hard and long during the first five days of the advance and in that period the cars cleared more than five hundred stretcher cases and travelled some twenty-two hundred miles.

The loaded cars travelled via Villers au Bois to the Main Dressing Station near the Chateau de la Haie. Here at the M.D.S. the staff had been working since the early hours to place the camp and hospital in readiness to receive the vast numbers of casualties which might be expected, since the XIth were to deal here with the wounded from the whole Fourth Division. As many men as possible had been sent up to the forward posts and the number of men remaining to staff the M.D.S. was small. But this staff had been thoroughly and efficiently organized by Colonel McQueen and each man had his post and knew his part in the system which had been devised to make the best possible use of the small staff, and every man was kept working effectively.

In No. 1 Nissen Hut the forepart had been fitted as the Admission and Discharge Room, while the rear was converted into a Dressing Room. On the dressing tables and shelves were stacks of gauze and bandages; piles of splints of all sizes, properly padded; surgical instruments and bowls of antiseptic solutions, all prepared and ready to the dressers hand. A number of Medical Officers, from Divisional Train and such units, had reported to Colonel McQueen to assist the doctors of the XIth on duty here: Major Moshier, Captain Secord, and Captain McClenahan. Men had been detailed for salvage work, for preparation and distribution of food, for orderly attendance in the hospital huts; and from the Divisional Training School men had come to bear a hand with the boys of the XIth Horse Transport in loading and unloading the stretcher cases and in carrying them through for dressing, food and attendance. Outside in the roadway and yard stood a line of thirty or so cars of the VIIIth Motor Ambulance Convoy waiting to carry the cases on to the C. C. S. It was about ten o'clock when the first casualties, mostly walking cases, arrived by lorries from the XIIth Ambulance post at Hospital Corner. Soon after the ambulances, loaded with stretcher cases, began to come from Gilday's post and from that time the lorries and ambulances came and went all day, and frequently trains came through direct on the light railway from Hospital Corner, bringing numbers of wounded to the M. D. S.

Train, ambulances or lorry, pulling up beside the line of Nissen Huts, were quickly unloaded by the bearer squads and as many cases as could be conveniently accommodated were immediately taken into the A. and D. room, while the remainder were sheltered in Huts II. and III. to be carried in for attention as their turns came. The clerks having taken a brief record of the man's identity and nature of his wounds, the stretcher casualty was carried into the Dressing room and set upon trestles, there to receive immediate attention from the Medical Officers and the dressers. There was accommodation for five stretcher cases and two walking cases in the dressing room and two dressers worked at each table under the direction of a Medical Officer. As each patient's wounds were dressed and his comfort attended to, he was removed to await his turn for a motor ambulance to C.C.S. During this time the "inner man" was ministered to: coffee and sandwiches were ready in large quantities and the Chaplains who were on duty worked unremittingly among the wounded, attending to spiritual and physical needs alike, while many field post cards were prepared by them and despatched to the relatives of the patients.

Among the most interesting cases handled during these days were two officers of the Flying Corps who had been forced to land near Givenchy before the attack on April 9th. Both were wounded and their captors had held them in a dug-out, finally leaving them in the charge of a wounded German, as their troops retired on the Tuesday. Here they were found and cared for by our own Stretcher-bearers.

### CHAPTER III.

At the Valley posts on Tuesday the situation remained much as it had been on the previous day. Wounded were still being brought in across the Ridge in large numbers, and the walking wounded continued to arrive in small parties to have their first rough dressings changed before making their way to the Ambulance posts in the rear. In the crowded dressing rooms the M.O.'s and their dressers were working steadily, assisted capably by the Padres. The atmosphere in these subterranean caves was by this time badly fouled. The damp, dripping ceilings and the wet, muddy floors, added to the revolting scenes inseparable from a busy field dressing room, made this place intolerable for anyone but those who were busily occupied every moment. With the XIth bearers the work of clearing had been proceeding intermittently through the midnight hours, but from day-break they were carrying steadily. The change in the weather, bringing a dull day with rain and snow, had turned the trails into mire tracks where the going was heavy, and the second day's carrying proved more strenuous than the first. Squads by now had undergone change but some fours still held together and these as well as individual bearers prided themselves on their scores of eighteen, nineteen and twenty trips since the commencement of the advance. But relief from the steady, unceasing work of carrying came during the day from a quarter that had been looked to expectantly for many hours.

Prisoners had come through during the night to be lodged in the "cages" in the tunnels and the necessary authority being granted, a number of them were sent down to the dressing rooms to assist the stretcher-bearers in clearing the wounded that day. These men, mostly Bavarians, proved to be willing workers, though they were already fatigued by their ordeal under the cannonading in the past week and were also badly in need of food. The sight of these muddled figures in all varieties of headgear and attire stolidly trudging their loads was one of the few humorous touches in the scenes of that day. Impressions of these odd-looking squads at work remain where other memories have faded. There was that very mixed squad of Bavarians which owned no other commander or authority than "Charlee" Nicoll, and though officer or sergeant gave directions or commands, he was the final authority whom alone they completely trusted. Of these Bavarians, Hermann had been a tailor (and he promised "Charlee" a suit after the war):—and Muller had been a bank-teller and spoke a little English, while of the others of more stolid type, one was a butcher and the other a brewery-porter.

But here behind the Ridge as prisoners of the British and willing conscripts in the Ambulance work, social caste and army rank were merged, and the haughty Sergeant-Major (a student from Bonn), wearing the ribbon of the Iron Cross, carried in a stretcher-squad beside the dirtiest and most miserable-looking private in muddy grey. Language being useless between Bavarian and Canuck, recourse was had to signs and signal words. "Hey-Hep" was generally understood and

accepted between both sides as the command for "Lift Stretcher," and of course, "Vorwärts" easily commended itself as a substitute for the command "March." To the boys in charge of these squads it was decidedly amusing to hear the familiar warnings "shell-hole on right," "wire underfoot," rendered in good colloquial German and between the commanders and their squads many little jokes could be enjoyed in common. A party halting at a shell-hole for a drink were stirred into speedy action by a shell falling unpleasantly near. "Ach, Allemand bombard pas bon," exclaimed the Heines as they seized the stretcher and hurried on. The parties of lightly wounded prisoners were usually conveyed by an armed guard or two. On one occasion, a shell falling somewhat near such a party, the guards had a prolonged game of hide and seek among the trenches and shell-holes, looking for their convoy; and on another, the amusing spectacle of an armed and fully equipped guard indulging in a hopeless foot race with a frightened prisoner, was viewed by the Ambulance boys with delight and some enthusiasm. In two ways these Bavarians were all alike; first in their jealous care of the little bags which all possessed, containing their identifications and sundry small treasures; and then in their zeal in collecting rations—bully-beef, biscuits and beans—which they hoarded up in sandbags for some emergency in the uncertain future. To these prisoners the Stretcher-bearers paid a general compliment for their willingness and endurance in carrying; but on the other hand, it is to be hoped that British prisoners in the hands of the enemy met with as fair consideration as those Bavarians received from the Ambulance boys.

It was toward ten o'clock on Tuesday night when all the Ambulance boys in the tunnels were at their last ounce of endurance, that the arrival of a number of XIIIth Ambulance men and a new batch of prisoners, brought at last the chance of a sadly-needed rest. In odd corners of the dressing room the boys in twos and threes huddled together to sleep heavily, while the prisoners carried on through the night under the command of the XIIIth men.

The Valley had been unmolested by enemy shells through the day and the "carriers" across to Micmac were not in any way hazardous, though the enemy still held a commanding position on the heights of the Ridge above Souchez, at a strong post known as "The Pimple." Weather conditions had been growing steadily worse and light rains and snow-furries made the journeys considerably more trying for wounded and bearer.

A stimulus had been given to the spirits of everyone by the cheering reports of the success of the attack. Fresh reports came through with every batch of wounded and the news was corroborated by the "tump-liners" who returned to the tunnels after taking a small supply of rations to the Infantrymen. These "tump-liners," or ration-carriers, were attached for a short period and assisted very materially in the work of clearing the wounded.

Incidents in carrying to and fro during these days were few. Everyone generally agreed that it was simple "mule work," where endurance and "guts" were the chief virtues required. Twice, at least, the squads carried out under a Canadian barrage when supporting attacks and new advances were made. There is a feeling of security and a certain exultation when Stretcher-bearing under a friendly barrage. But to walk steadily nearer to the hammering machine guns, carefully concealed, as they tear off reels of ammunition during a box barrage, requires the exercise of a certain amount of nerve. The hail of bullets passing overhead makes an awesome but fascinating noise, likened aptly by one boy to "sounds of bacon frying in hell."

It was not until Wednesday morning that an attack was made against the strong post on the Pimple, still occupied by the enemy. The weather conditions, severe as they were, aided the attacking Infantry, for a violent snow-storm swept up at dawn, blowing directly in the faces of the enemy who were completely blinded as the Canadians advanced. But the Stretcher-bearers carrying out against this blizzard found the going anything but easy. All traces of the trail were completely obliterated, and marks could not be seen and the tracks of the squads ahead were covered up within a very few moments. In these conditions footing had to be watched closely, for the eye could scarcely detect a break in the contour of the ground where shell-holes were numerous. To the seriously wounded the hardships of such a journey could scarcely be exaggerated; the bearers themselves found it severe enough and at the risk of a wreck, hands were thrust into pockets and the burden left to balance on the shoulders. It was without wonder that the bearers heard that "The Pimple" had been taken by storm.

On the third day of the advance a copy of the "Daily Mail" was sent up to Micmac and for the first time the important results of the "Big Push" were known among the bearers. It seemed utterly incongruous that those in the Field should hear first authentic news from London. Put it was the comments and colourings supplied from "personal news gleanings" which made the Press account so interesting to the group gathered around the reader. This is not to malign the "Daily Mail", which provided the soldier with his only information of daily events, yet some accounts of the Advance, read at a later date, were received with uproarious mirth. Most evidently the wounded and others who supplied the material for copy had recognized the value of such a unique opportunity for the Army's favourite pastime; and the unknown whose fertile imagination provided the story of "Crocuses blooming on the Ridge, being plucked by the Infantry boys as they strolled across in the radiant dawn" surely deserves official mention.

The subject of discussion and speculation, the common question of everyone, was now, "When will the Division be relieved?" Men felt they had done all that could be expected of them, yet no signs of a relief were seen until Friday, when, after five days of fighting and consolidating, officers and men of Imperial Infantry battalions—Cheshires, Warwicks and Norfolks—were met in the trenches behind the Ridge. Everywhere hopes of immediate relief were raised. But for the Ambulance boys there were still days of work ahead. The enemy had been working desperately to prepare positions to oppose any further advance. The Canadians were equally busy bringing up guns, re-making roads and trenches, and laying light railway tracks over the captured ground to restore communications with the new line positions. Fighting was very local and confined to advanced outposts on both sides, so that the numbers of casualties diminished considerably. Many of those carried out during these later days were men who had been wounded earlier in the Advance, who on being hit had dressed themselves or had received first aid from battalion Stretcher-bearers. Crawling to the shelter of a shell-hole or a dug-out, they had been forced to remain there through days and nights, unable to help themselves any further. Sheer courage and stoicism brought these men through such an ordeal. Carrying out a boy of nineteen, who, with a wound in the thigh, had lain three days and nights doubled up in a shell-hole, a bearer asked him how he had spent the long hours—how his mind had been occupied, "Oh, I didn't think much," he replied diffidently, adding with a confidential smile, "but I just knew our boys would find me."

The reliefs were carried out in the advanced lines on Friday night by battalions of the Cheshires and Warwicks. Early on Saturday morning the Norfolks were due to go over the Ridge to support these battalions. The Ambulances of their Division failing to appear, the XIth was requested to supply a detail to accompany them and clear the casualties for the three battalions back to the Ridge posts. Accordingly a squad of six reported to the H. Q. of the Norfolk battalion at four o'clock on Saturday morning and being attached to the Medical Officer's staff, they "fell in" with the two companies and set out across the Ridge. A more desolate scene than this battle-field could scarcely be imagined. Every foot of earth had been upheaved time and time again during the furious bombardments from both sides, until the very bowels of the Ridge had been hurled on high and spread abroad, and clay, chalk and gravel had been so mingled together and compounded with the moisture as to resemble the contents of a gigantic haggis. The whole plateau was so flooded that it presented the appearance of a series of lagoons and in some places the only possible footing across the Ridge was afforded by narrow, slippery reefs of mud thrown up around the shell-holes and dividing one lake from another. Amid this flood, in all attitudes, lay the half-submerged bodies of the dead, whose blood had coloured to rusty red the stagnant water lapping around them. Everywhere lay the debris of war—abandoned equipment of both armies, clothing of khaki and field gray, ammunition and arms, and the meagre visible remains of wire entanglements, wrecked trenches and dug-outs.

Strung out in a long file, the companies slowly made their way through this morass, winding around the worst bogs and sloughs to get a footing. Checks were frequent and several times men who had incautiously stepped into mire holes, after being relieved of their equipment were with difficulty hauled out by their comrades.

To the XIth bearers it was an exhilarating experience to be treading the heights of this Ridge, which through the winter siege had come to be regarded with dread. Even yet it seemed to them to be courting disaster for a full company to be marching

over the crest in broad daylight. But as they beheld the panorama spread before them for miles around, fearful feelings were dissipated in a cheering glow of contentment and hopefulness. At their feet lay the ruins of the village of Givenchy; to left and right other desolated villages might be seen, while outspread on the plain lay the city and suburbs of Lens. As far as the eye could see the great plains stretched abroad, chequered with towns, villages and numerous mines, netted with railways, broad treed highways and country roads. Nowhere in the whole landscape was a sign of the enemy to be seen. Surely this was a great and decisive victory which the Canadians had won.

Passing down the lower slopes into Givenchy signs were to be seen on all hands of the hasty flight of the enemy before the assaults of the Canadians. Equipment and arms were scattered broadcast; piles of ammunition for trench guns lay stacked beside battered railways and here and there the wreck of a field gun testified to the accurate shooting of our own Artillery. In the village there was not a complete storey of a building to be seen. The church was barely recognizable as such save for the remnants of a window in a wall still standing and a sight of battered crosses of iron planted insecurely in the church-yard. Smoke was still ascending from smouldering ruins of buildings and dug-outs. In one gun emplacement the bodies of the trapped gunners lay blackened and charred. Concrete emplacements, reinforced with iron girders and rods, had been crushed like egg-shells. The gun crews lay beside the wreckage in huddled heaps. In the quiet of the calm, bright morning the beholder could scarcely believe the reality of the stark horrors around him.

The Norfolks pushed on beyond Givenchy and failing to get information as to the front line positions, struck out overland and reached the enemy's old reserve line, which they occupied. In one of the dug-outs which lined the rear of this trench the XIth boys took up their quarters when they had tired of exploring the underground chambers which the enemy had built so thoroughly. The first wounded man to be cleared was able to walk and one bearer alone accompanied him across the Ridge. The boys had "souvenired" very successfully and it was during these operations that George Hepworth discovered an enemy Dressing Station furnished, as he informed his chums, with "beaucoup morphine and antitet, umpteen dressings and chairs and tables," the same which afterwards became Herald's Post. But the enemy by this time had got busy with machine guns and shells and the boys were satisfied to take refuge in a headquarters dug-out which was badly fouled, as indeed were all the dug-outs.

The future being very uncertain and a feeling of separation creeping over the boys, their high spirits of the morning ebbed speedily and they now became anxious for a relief to arrive. It was the middle of the afternoon that they were called up to clear a stretcher case and one other badly wounded man who was only able to walk with much assistance. The five bearers set out on their long and heavy carry none too hopefully, but in passing through Givenchy the advanced parties of the Imperial Field Ambulance were met coming in. These were being guided by two XIth boys who later caught up to and joined the out-going party. With this added help the "carry" up the slope of the Ridge was managed with less labour than was expected. The worst part of the trip was yet before them, but again good fortune brought along two XIIth men who were searching for any wounded still lying out on the Ridge, and the slow and difficult carry across the old "No Man's Land" to the Aid Post in Gobron tunnel was accomplished without mishap.

For several days the boys remaining in the Valley posts had very little carrying to do and it seemed unnecessary for them to be delayed there any longer. Everyone was impatient now to get back to the Chateau camp for a much-needed bath and change of clothes and a real rest. Some of these boys had been more than three weeks in the line and in their "hygienic" condition sleep was very restless in spite of fatigue. Living conditions at these posts had greatly improved. Hot meals could be made and sleeping accommodation was sufficient and snug, for the field. The arrival of a huge letter mail from Canada was received as a gift from Olympus for the bearers' share in the great victory and the boys sat out in the sun for a whole morning reading and re-reading the long epistles from the home folks who little foresaw the unique circumstances in which those letters would be read.

The system of posts through the Valley had now been entirely changed. Micmac was held by two men and the few wounded still being cleared through the tunnel posts were carried out to Cabaret Rouge Post, which had been taken over by the XIth, while casualties on the left sector were cleared by way of Dingwall tunnel on the light railway through Souchez.

For days large Labour Battalion parties had been at work along the Valley and on the Ridge, salvaging equipment and arms, ammunition and war material of every description. Parties of men worked everywhere building roads over the Ridge, dismantling strong posts and emplacements and preparing new positions for the heavier guns. Cleared of debris and with parties of men working in the open everywhere, how changed was the aspect of the once dreaded "Death Valley"!

Beside the Arras Road, which stretcher parties had been used to traverse ignoring the warnings from the sentry to use the trench, there now appeared a cluster of tents and bow huts with a General's pennant floating on a lance beside them. Across the way near Micmac Post a battalion of the East Surreys was encamped, and lining the road near Cabaret Rouge were several batteries of light artillery. Hospital Corner, where the Infantry had been used to pass in parties just before entering Cabaret Trench, now had become a busy town of tents and "bivvies", horse-lines and wagon parks and everywhere men defied the warnings displayed on old trench signs: "No passage this way by daylight;" "Keep close in to the bank;" "Keep to the trench."

## CHAPTER IV.

SPRINGTIME, 1917

By the 20th of April all the squads who had gone up for Vimy had returned to the Chateau camp—a palefaced, mudstained band. To the joy of reunion and the pleasure at leaving the line there was added the realization that the enemy had received, to say the least, a nasty blow. Moreover Old Winter had sent down his last loads of snow, and Lady Spring was beginning to "take over." Here was Sunny France at last. Not soon will it be forgotten how the woodlands around the Chateau, coaxed by many a sunshine day, burst forth like one huge blossom. To the bright green of the trees, the fruit blossoms soon lent their dainty coloring and the desolate scene of the past few months became transformed with loveliness. Even that dismal village known as Gouy Servins took on from the distance an appearance fair as an English hamlet.

The hospital, which during the push had been a Main Dressing Station only, now began to receive sick men, chiefly cases of trench fever. Finishing touches were put to the buildings and the cookhouse became a model one; the best the unit ever possessed in France. Porridge (which only later became an "issue") was subscribed for and altogether the feeding was excellent.

Now clearly, with the Ambulance united, was the time to prepare the first number of the Unit's magazine "M. & D." (Medicine and Duty), a project which had been launched at the Four Winds. Editor F. C. Chapman got right down to work, collected copy and submitted it for censorship, but it was many a day before the little journal made its appearance.

May 14th, the first anniversary of the Unit's departure from Winnipeg, was curiously celebrated by the holding of a mock University Convocation. It happened that several members of the XIth, but for the war, would have been graduating at either Manitoba or Saskatchewan University; indeed, their degrees were at this time granted *in absentia* on account of military service; so that the idea of this Convocation in France—promoted by some of the older University men with the XIth—was particularly happy. Looking back it can only be regarded as a calamity that a film was not procured of that side-splitting procession of soldiers marching round the camp, camouflaged in scholars' gowns and hoods manufactured out of everything from a sand-bag to a canvas water bucket.

The opening address by the Chancellor, Dr. Fletcher, delivered in the finest Latin ("Tully's every word"), though Greek to most, will not soon be forgotten. The speech of the monocolled Minister of Education, The Right Hon. Howard Winkler, B.S.A., was an excellent example of what a public servant can do in the line of manipulating the truth when he really tries. Dr. Chapman's brief but encouraging report was received with applause, after which the following graduates of Manitoba were presented by Dean Nicoll to the Chancellor for the B.A. degree:

Albert Roland Hall, John Gordon Andison, John Edward Cooper, Herbert James Tomkins, George Gordon Grigg.

Dean Luckraft presented the one graduate of the University of Saskatchewan, viz: Robert Luther Harold.



The granting of the honorary degrees (fictitious in this instance) afforded an evening's entertainment in itself. Dr. Hyslop in presenting Albertus Edwardus Johnson very humourously indicated that gentleman's worthiness to receive the degree of LL.D. (Dispenser of Light Literature). The regretted absence of Nobbus Clark, Esq., necessitated the holding over of his degree of M.S.O. (Master of Steak and Onions). It is believed that the gentleman was too busy cooking them to attend.

Professor Graham's presentation of Judge Crawford, was one of the most masterly speeches of the evening. The professor's witty remarks on the subject of Schetzenhausen nearly lifted the sheet iron from the roof of Nissen Hall. But the climax of hilarity was reached when, after an able speech by Dr. Greenwood, the Chancellor was about to place the M.D. (Master of Disputation) hood on the shoulders of Edmund Chambers, Esq. Suddenly from the back of the hall rang out the raucous voice of Dooley Wells,—"I protest against the degree: this man's a SPY!"

Invited by the Chancellor to prove his accusation Mr. Wells advanced to the platform and, after a vigorous search in the vicinity of the spy's underpants, produced a map of the Rhine and a bottle of arsenic. Forthwith, the assembly all agog, the Chancellor called for the guard, and within the flash of a gun, there was heard down the aisle the tramping of Corporal Neal and his squad of mule-skinner, armed with rifles, who summarily escorted the "tough guy" to the "clink." To such depths can a Methodist minister descend.

When order was again restored, Dr. Greenwood rose to deny any knowledge of the evicted one's mal-intentions and Dr. Chapman also expressed his regret that the University had been so deceived. The President said they had believed that, although it was true that Mr. Chambers' front teeth were worn away through kissing barmaids' necks and eating barbed wire, he was now thoroughly reformed.

The last gentleman to be honored was his Eminence Mandarin McMahon. Dressed in a gaudy Chinese costume, with his pigtail and smiling oriental visage, his Eminence made a striking figure even among the richly robed assembly on the platform. The Mandarin was ably presented by Celestial Straith, who was also in native attire. Loud cheers accompanied the placing of the D.Litt. hood on his Eminence's shoulders, and still louder was the applause which followed his Eminence's speech, delivered in the purest Chinese. Doubtless this outburst was intended to convey the thanks of the audience for the abundant and constant supply of rice which, as Celestial Straith had pointed out, his Eminence had been the means of procuring.

The presentation of medals followed. The Governor General's for general efficiency went to George Gordon Grigg, who was to have been presented by the incarcerated Edmund Chambers. Roland Hall received the Michael Angelo medal for art. He was presented by W. C. Pearson, F.R.A., whose speech consisted principally of a resumé of Mr. Hall's works. He referred to that "sterling" masterpiece, "The Lost Transport" and to that equally fine picture entitled "The Retreat," or "Everybody up and down stairs." Mr. Pearson also spoke of a work which Mr. Hall was then engaged on, entitled "The Warrior," the selected verse for which was—

Greathearted soldier who has fought,  
In many a battle dearly bought,  
Nor ever thought to run or budge,  
Greathearted warrior, dear old Pudge.

Prof. Hugh Staines in presenting Robert Luther Harold for the University Bronze medal for Deportment pointed out what a public benefactor Mr. Harold was in these days of fiercely insisted-on uniformity.

The closing event of the evening was the able address of his honour Judge Crawford of the U.S.A. Supreme Court. The Judge said he deplored the fact that the 3 R's were still the basis of modern education. He recommended, as an alternative, a vigorous inculcation into young minds of the 3 B's—Bluff, Boost, and Bull. Let them seek out a person more ignorant than themselves (they would have to look closely) and then apply the 3 B's for all they were worth. He commiserated with the young graduates before him, ignorant and innocent alike of Bluff, Boost and Bull, and hinted that the blame lay with the wretched system of political graft which placed in office such men as the specimens they had before them in the Minister of Education. Rt. Hon. Winkler, who was dozing at the time, here received a dig in the ribs from the Chancellor who was himself thereupon implicated by the Judge. Nor did the President himself, Dr. Chapman, escape the lash of His Honor's whip. Indiscreetly Dr. Chapman sang out for the guard again, but he was effectively checkmated by the Judge,

who threatened to divulge certain incriminating information respecting the President. Putting their heads together Drs. Fletcher and Chapman decided on clemency. A most enjoyable evening, a red letter day for the XIth, concluded with "the King," and the vociferous rendering of Western University yells.

Distant as the line itself now was, "Old Fritz" did not fail to greet us almost nightly by way of the air. The proximity of the Villers aerodrome, to where the hun used to follow our returning bombers, made for unpleasant interruption in the dreams of Chateau sleepers. Picture the scene—a Nissen hut, the floor of which is covered with sleeping soldiers rolled in blankets. Soon every man is awake from the horrid, rhythmic droning of a boche bombing plane. It has come very close. n-n-n- "I'm after you, you, you." -n-n-n. Every man is awake with the noise and, make no mistake, quite fearful. Conversation commences. Says one,

"Listen to that old devil."

"Pretty close," remarks a second.

"It's ours," says a third.

"Like fun it's ours."

A bomb falls with a thudding crash.

"Keep under the blankets, chilluns," cheerily remarks one; and another man feeling for his steel helmet, observes dryly—

"Gosh, if one dropped here a feller 'ud have a hard time collecting his thoughts, wouldn't he?"

There is another loud crash.

"That's a dud," says someone.

"If that's a dud I'd hate like the mischief to hear a live one."

A Job's comforter says:—

"Oh, well, they only carry four and he's already dropped two."

The third crash occasions a bantam private's remark:—

"They tell me I'm small, but, by gosh, I feel like Vimy Ridge tonight."

A fourth crash is heard further off, and the man who had counselled keeping under the blankets says, rolling over to sleep—

"You can all go bye-bye now, chilluns; it will take him at least half an hour to get another stock of pills!"

Whitsuntide with its delightful weather came round and tent life became more and more pleasant. On Whit Sunday, Pte. Geo. Gray of B. Section (afterwards chaplain) conducted an early morning Celebration of Holy Communion in one of the huts. He was assisted by Corporal Downer, as Pte. F. C. Chapman (the usual "padre" on such special occasions) had been appropriated by the Chaplain Service for duty at Cambrai L'Abbe. Corp. Morgan (later chaplain) had been commandeered for similar duty at Gouy Servins. Thus was the good name of the XIth established.

On May 16th, B. Section left camp for Estree Cauchee there to take over the hospital for infectious skin diseases. By all accounts the life at Estree Cauchee suited the B. boys down to the ground and could have continued for the duration. The weather was beautiful, so that the hospital grounds, studded with blossom-laden trees, presented an altogether charming picture. Duties were light and the food—well cooked by the admirable "Nobby"—fit for a king.

Meanwhile Col. McQueen had organized a Sports Field Day, the events of which were to take the form of a competition between the three sections. That rivalry would be keen soon became evident from the course of training undertaken by intending contestants. A. Section, under trainer Bradley, even went the length of dieting!

Certain events such as football, basketball, and baseball were "pulled off" before June 4th, the date of the sports proper. A strenuous "battle of boots" took place at Estree Cauchee where the "B's," notwithstanding much encouragement from their scabies patients marshalled on the line, failed to "put it over" the visiting "C's." The replay on June 1st on the Maisnil Bouche ground, was as vigorously contested. Murray got through for C in the second half; B equalized, but the referee ruled the goal offside.

C. did well also at basketball, beating A and B to the tune of 5-9 and 8-6 respectively. At indoor baseball the honors fell to A, who trimmed C by 9 to 7, and B 28 to 14. C fell down to A at outdoor baseball, 8-6, but B, whose luck thus far had been badly out, redeemed themselves by a thorough beating of A to a point where it was agreed to leave off counting.

June 4th was a perfect day for sports—brilliant sunshine and a refreshing breeze. In spite of the intermittent reports of guns, or the array of some score of observation

balloons hanging between Bethune and Arras, and notwithstanding the all-day purring of aeroplanes above, not to speak of the spiteful cracking of "Archies," it may be doubted whether any of the men of the Eleventh realized that there was any other war on than their own sectional contest.

A Section by their previous triumphs began the day with a good credit. C Section had a showing also, but B was practically bankrupt. When, however, the last named began to creep up in points and C drew ahead of A, the competition grew intensely exciting. Concert pitch was reached at the tug-of-war between C and A, — a fine event, which C, by sheer exhaustion of their opponents, managed to pull off. Readers of this chronicle who were present, will certainly recall the huge bulk of MacLaren, (C Sec.) with his leg-of-mutton arms and giant shoulders, tugging—as he himself would have expressed it—"tugging to beat hell."

Joe Smith, of "A", who had helped his section so much in football and baseball, also shone in running and jumping. His fine, clean methods were a treat to watch; so were those of Pearson (C) who, against good runners, had obtained first place in both the mile and the half mile. Young and Wells did splendidly for B, with the result that, at the end of the day they were bracketed with Pearson for the initial championship of the unit.



By supper time C was leading A by nine points but the two sections had still to meet at football. The game counted eleven points. Thus if A could secure a win they would run out Section champions by two points. A's trainer, Bradley, issued the command that the game must be won at all costs. C's skipper was no less imperious; so that it was a battle royal that was fought out after supper. In the first half it looked as if C was going to secure the championship by a further victory, but their shooting was feeble, and half time arrived with the score blank. "A" woke up with the second half and tested C's defense; and then, when a drawn game looked probable, Bill Wood, playing centre half for C had the bad luck to put through his own goal. The "C" fellows having thus had the championship wrested from them at the last moment, naturally felt disappointed. The final scores were close—A. 43; C. 41; B. 37.

Later in the evening Col. McQueen presented the trophy, a handsome brass Chanticleer, to Captain Secord of "A" Section. This had been subscribed for by the officers, as also had the prizes of a wrist watch, Gillette razor, and fountain pen, presented to Wells (B); Pearson (C), and Young (B), respectively. This pleasant day in the annals of the XIth was crowned by the news received that evening (read out in Daily Orders) that Col. McQueen, Capt. Kerr and Capt. McClenahan had appeared in Sir Douglas Haig's despatch of April 9th. Then on June 12th came through the news that Col. McQueen had been created a member of the Distinguished Service Order. Vociferous and spontaneous cheering interpreted the men's pleasure at this award, so deservedly won by so fine an officer.

Not only in the Eleventh Field Ambulance, but in all the Canadian Units, field days at this time were taking place in connection with Unit, Brigade, Division and finally, Corps. A representative team drawn from the three Ambulances of the 4th Division, (XIth, XIIth, and XIIIth.) after some contests in which the Divisional

Train, the Divisional Artillery, the 47th Batt. (twice), the 54th Batt., 72nd Batt., and the R.C.A.'s were all overcome, carried off the honors of champion football team of the Division. On this team representing the XIth, were Corben (goal), Joe and Dick Smith, (backs), and Dabbs (forward). The Ambulance team finally went down to the 27th Batt., who thus ran out Corps Champions.

The result of these sports, (which, of course, were undertaken with no interruption in the carrying out of duty), together with the fine summer weather, was that the troops kept in the very pink of condition, and the familiar newspaper superlatives as to the excellent spirits and appearance of the men could hardly, at this time at any rate, have been exaggerated.

Changes in the personnel of the Unit had meanwhile been taking place. Capt. Lindsay, the more than popular Quarter-master, was evacuated with gastritis. It was hard for the men to realize that at the end of some weary day of marching they would no longer joyfully behold that Falstaffian figure, wedged on his inoffensive nag, smiling at the weary company in the locality of its billets for the night.

The ranks of the N.C.O.'s were greatly depleted on May 28th, when Sgt. A. N. Somerville, Corps. N. F. W. Graham, M. E. Tiffin and F. D. Locke as third year medical students, left camp, not for the base, not for England, but for Canada! The thing seemed fabulous. One looked at the lucky beggars and wondered what kind of a sensation it was to wake up one morning at the old war and realize that you were that day to set out from Hell for God's Country. For truly in those times also: "Facilis descensus Averna, sed revocare gradum, hic labor, hoc opus est." Somerville of C. Section, Graham, Tiffin and Locke of B., were all fine men and were much missed, not only efficient N.C.O.'s, but as good comrades.

Capt. Abbott was taken on the strength on June 1st, and quickly won a place in the regard of the men, with whom he turned out and played football. It was with a feeling of regret that the Eleventh gave him up to the Ninth Field Ambulance. With that unit at Passchendaele Capt. Abbott won the M. C.

## CHAPTER V.

### ANGRES

On June 14th, the unmistakable heraldings of buglers told that B. Section, who had been at Estree Cauchee a nearly month. were returning to camp. On the following day the whole Unit left the Chateau camp for Toronto Junction, better known as Hospital Corner, beyond Carency. Although there had been the hospital to run and the usual quota of fatigues, the last six weeks at the Chateau Camp had been exceedingly pleasant. The men felt that that camp was theirs, as no other place had ever seemed to be. The Sergeants cast mournful glances at their tavern (the house on the hill) and wished that they could take it along. Corp. Keith, who had been appointed Keeper of the Bees that had swarmed on the Colonel's tent, well nigh wept when a place could not be found for them on a G. S. wagon.

Now Line work lay ahead and a camp amid the desolation of an old battleground.

The M.D.S. at the Junction was taken over from the XIIth and their squads were relieved at the various advanced stations. In taking over the line posts the bearers ran into some bad shelling at Angres and were obliged to take cover under the railway bridge just beyond the fosse. A terrible racket was caused by the bursting of shrapnel among the ironwork of the mine and by the crash of shells among the houses. The post at Angres, known as Paulin's and consisting of the lower premises of a warehouse protected by sandbags, was at this time the A.D.S. From here cases were cleared by light railway to the M.D.S. at Hospital Corner. Apart from occasional strafes, Paulin's was quiet enough, enabling the boys to gather roses from the abandoned cottage gardens wherewith to make wreaths for the graves of their fallen comrades.

From Angres is related the story of a certain doughty reinforcement who at this time used to venture forth to a strawberry patch and fill his steel helmet with the luscious berries. This in spite of solemn warnings from old hands that he would certainly be sniped. As the intrepid one continued to stake his life for the berries, a friendly party got to work and sent a few bullets through the trees above the patch. That night the reinforcement had something to write home about, and the adventure still remains as one of his closest shaves.

The R. A. P. known as number 3 was located on a spur track of the light railway to the right of Lievin, while at the crossing of the roads between the villages of Angres, Vimy, Givenchy and LaCoulotte was the relay post known as Napoo Corner—a spot which thoroughly justified its name. At least one amusing incident occurred here however. During a lull in the carrying out of cases a few of the bearers whiled away the time with a game of cards. Frequently someone would enter the dugout and shut out the sunlight which shone down from the entrance. Finally a big form appeared completely obliterating the daylight. "Who the devil is this now?" demanded one of the players with exasperation. It was Colonel McQueen, who apologized.

Through Napoo Corner were cleared R.A.P. No. 1, between Petit Vimy and a post in Anxious Trench between the front line and supports. Back on the outskirts of Givenchy, Captains Kerr and Abbott, Sgt. Musgrove and a dresser or two had their quarters. This post known as Heralds, also served as an aid station to the reserve trenches. It had been a German aid post and was discovered by Hepworth after Vimy.

Owing to the excellent weather conditions, which kept the roads hard and dry, wheel-stretchers could be used more than on any previous occasion. Thus the work of clearing was rendered easier and the distance over shelled areas could be more quickly covered. The line work was far from light, for, once driven from the ridge the enemy was not allowed to settle down. La Coulotte soon fell to Canadian troops and also part of Avion. The taking of the latter piece of ground necessitated the moving forward of R.A.P. No. 3—from the good, comfortable dugouts of an old enemy signal station to a brick field near the village of Petit Bois, a distance of nearly a mile. Here the only accommodation to be found was in some old dismantled gun pits, open toward the enemy lines and only partially protected by the brick piles. Shelling was very heavy around this post, but luckily Fritz scored no direct hits. From here stretcher cases had to be carried out over badly torn ground to the nearest point on the light railway, where a relay squad awaited them in the doubtful shelter of some abandoned and dilapidated dugouts.

The light railway, which had pushed up around the Ridge and onwards as if laid by a magician, proved invaluable in the evacuation of wounded. On one occasion at midnight when the hospital truck was following up a train with a working party aboard, a shell lit clean on the track between the two loads. Some half a dozen of the working party were wounded and the hospital truck was held up until the track had been repaired.

In addition to the posts mentioned was the spacious dugout known as McGill's on Vimy Ridge. This had once been a German A.D.S. for the north end of the Ridge, but now served the purpose of our bearers' reserve post. Full advantage was taken of the leisure time spent there, especially by Reinhorn who never studied the classics so diligently. Pelmanism came in for some attention, while in this same dugout were first inaugurated the chess and checker tournaments.

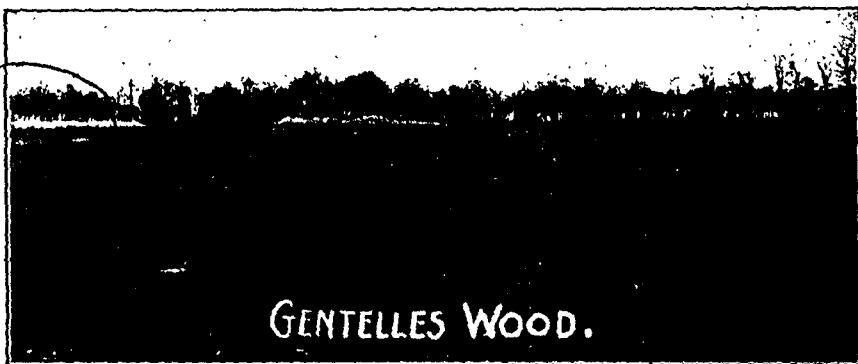
The weather continued glorious though at times oppressive. Under the circumstances life at camp was not unpleasant. Those little homes known as bivvies which were variously constructed along the sheltering banks by Hospital Corner, had been made from all sorts of material, such as barbed wire staples, iron supports for dugouts, ground sheets, shot away trees, tarpaulins, signal wire. Pretentious names, such as "Fort Garry Hotel" and "Zeppel Inn," were given to these rude abodes, which were generally built for two—man and wife. Some of the men preferred to bunk down among the shrubbery along the little Souchez River, where a morning sluice was so easily obtainable and even an occasional dip, though both washing and bathing in the Souchez were at this time "Verboten." A huge Jack Johnson shellhole lined with a tarpaulin made an excellent swimming pool and even allowed of a good dive. Many a half hour's fun was enjoyed in this hole beside the Souchez, where, since no civilians were any where near, "the little wanton boys" could disport themselves unblushingly.

A diversion was afforded those working at the M.D.S. by the proximity of an observation balloon, the piloting of which by the hearty old flight sergeant was entertainment enough. "On to the ropes, stem to port, pull down on the ropes," these were some of the orders. During the Xlth spell of duty the enemy did not attempt to get the balloon by overhead shrapnel, nor was it attacked by aeroplane. The Xlth had more exciting times in this respect. On one occasion a high wind having arisen, they

were suddenly called upon to assist the R.F.C. men in holding down their exhilarated gasbag. It appears nearly to have got out of hand and, according to the airmen's story, certainly would have done so but for the timely medical assistance.

Friendship between the various branches of the service was a very real thing all along. The green infantry man might refer to the ambulance man as a trench dodger, but once let him be carried out wounded or tended behind the line for sickness and his estimation underwent a change. On several occasions at Vimy, infantrymen, seeing ambulance men about to bear out across the Zouave Valley would say "I wouldn't have your job on a bet." What the ambulance men thought of the Infantry this record has already made clear. Passing the gunners and hastening from the deafening racket of the cannon, and observing the enemy feeling for our guns with overhead shrapnel and H.E., infantry, engineers and ambulance men alike remarked that they (the gunners) could keep their job. Nor did anyone envy the night journeys of the A.S.C. or D.A.C. man along roads up to the front, the range of which the enemy often had down to an inch. It was not an uncommon sight to behold in the gray dawn, man and mule flung dead into the roadside ditch from the vicious work of a "crump" on the road.

Thus it was each to his work in the confraternity of death. And in this connection a story of the engineers seems apropos. A party from the Twelfth Field Company, (beside whom the Eleventh Field Ambulance often found itself) went over the top



GENTELLES WOOD.

with the infantry on one occasion before Vimy, for the purpose of mopping up enemy dugouts with very deadly explosives. It was the engineers' first time over the top and naturally an eventful occasion. The raid was successful and all the engineers, their deadly work done, got back safely. One man, the excitement over, was feeling pretty blue about the horrible business. Not so "Bill Watts" who was as elated as a school boy returning from "scrumping" in an orchard.

"The infantrymen have the best of it all along," said "Watts" enthusiastically. "I tell you, it's the king of outdoor sports!" Then, confidentially, "I shot four myself—Brown could have got 'em." Brown, it appears, when practising at the ranges in England, had been known to hit the target once!

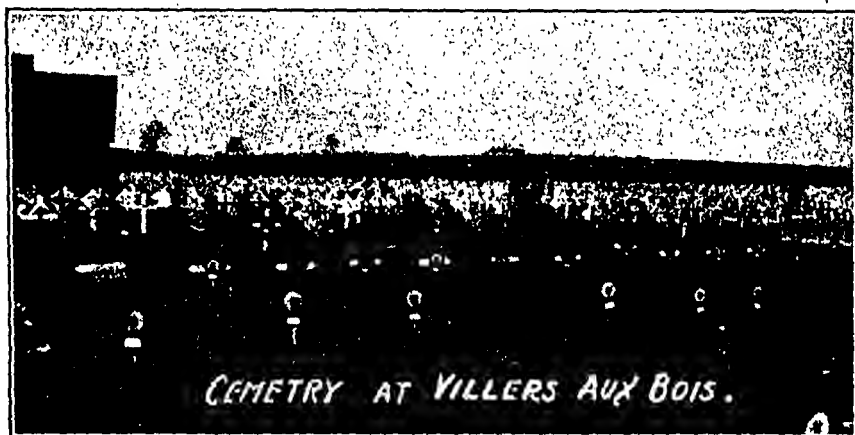
On June 18th, a thrilling thing took place at camp. Five men and a sergeant went to Paris. Leave! had it really at last begun for the Eleventh? The going of four privates and a lance-corporal a week later seemed to indicate that indeed it had; and when, on June 24th, the first private went to Blighty—to Blighty! hopes ran high in every breast. Ah, how good the very contemplation of it was. But, awful thought, supposing peace came soon.

The line work continued to be of an average nature with no particularly exciting times. The excellent light railway service (one can never tire of praising it) greatly facilitated the work of the bearers. No casualties in their ranks had occurred during this trip. On June 26th, however, when a party of C. Section bearers were relieving those of B, at Napoo Corner a shell lit clean in among the company. Staff Sgt. J. R. Hammond was instantly killed, while C. S. Murray and S. Hanson lived but a few

moments. No less than eight others were hit, C. R. Dier, and G. W. Hepworth badly so. Cpl. W. M. Musgrove, who at the time the shell lit was nearest Sgt. Hammond, happening to be seated, escaped death as by a miracle, while Chambers, in addition to being hit in the leg received a non-penetrating wound in the stomach.

It was the saddest day the Eleventh had known. Until now they had been lucky, but the run of good fortune, by this devil-directed shell, had received a sickening arrest: and the deaths had been of such fine men. Sgt. Hammond, who was a B.A. and 2nd year Medical Student of Alberta had done splendid work both in the matter of training the unit in Canada and England and also on active service. Respected alike by all officers and men, he was held in particular esteem by the men of his own section (B), who had proved his worth from the beginning. Sgt. Hammond, who was mentioned in Sir Douglas Haig's despatch of 7-11-17, was admittedly the most efficient soldier the unit possessed; an excellent sportsman also, being a keen promoter and player of baseball.

In C. S. Murray another good stretcher-bearer had been lost. In B.C. before the war Murray had been on the New Westminster team and had played in the senior amateur lacrosse and football Championship of the world. For the Eleventh in football he played a good game at outside left, while always finding a place on the sections



baseball team. As a bearer, Murray, though a bantam, was game to the last. It had only been a few weeks previously, that he had been obliged to return to camp from the Ridge soaked from the waist downward in mud.

The circumstances were these. A day or two before Vimy, Singleton and Murray, with three infantrymen carried out a stretcher case across Zouave Valley to Wortley Trench en route for the Central Post on the Arras Road. At the entrance to Wortley Trench, which had been badly pounded by the enemy shellfire, was a pond of mud some thirty feet across. In this the bearers stuck fast as in a slough, and from the weight of the stretcher case sank down to the knees. After fifteen minutes vain struggling, Murray ran back to the R.A.P. for help. The entrance to Wortley was an unhealthy spot at which to be detained, for prior to Vimy, the enemy rarely let up shelling the valley and had in fact scored one or two direct hits on the entrance to Wortley Trench. Murray, who had been gone some fifteen minutes, returned with his "wife," Gilchrist, and after another quarter of an hour's struggle, the party got on to the trench mats in Wortley. The enemy had meanwhile commenced to shell and two or three crumps lit into the bank. The man on the stretcher narrowly escaped further wounds, and certainly, had the party been detained a minute or two longer, the consequences might have been fatal for them all. Murray, who from the smallness of his stature seems to have suffered most from the mire, came down to camp smiling through his mud. He soon returned, however, and carried on throughout Vimy.

Of Hanson mention has already been made on the occasion of his being recommended for an award. Sam had a good, healthy sense of humor and many had been the dismal, dugout hour that he had enlivened by mimicry and reminiscences, while it was always a treat to listen to his fine tenor voice. A lover of argument, Sam was never so happy as when he could "get going" theologue or parson, though indeed anyone else would do. Sometimes in these arguments he would get heated with his opponent, but soon came round again to remark kindly, "Ah, but he's a nice lad is so and so." A very lovable, generous-hearted comrade, Sam.

Of the eight men wounded by that one shell much anxiety was felt for Dier and Hepworth, whose conditions was serious. Having received every attention at the Main Dressing Station, they were accompanied by Major Moshier to the C.C.S., the most fervent wishes of their comrades going with them. Dier's right arm was amputated, but the drain to a system already much robbed, was too great, and the news which reached camp was the worst.

Of Dier with his gentlemanly ways, his thoughtful face and big, dark, finely-lit eyes, softened by a certain sadness, it would be difficult to speak too highly. There were certain men—doubtless it was the case in every unit—who more than others seemed to be the soul of the unit. Of such was Dier. Boylike in appearance, in his merry ways and wistful face, Dier was yet a whole man and utterly reliable.

And what shall be said of Geordie Hepworth, who, lingering until July 6th, finally died of his wounds. Prince among manly souls, his praise is above poetry, though instinctively one thinks of the lines, (which, than this young Canadian, the Roman Brutus no more deserved)—

"His life was gentle, and the elements  
So mixed in him, that nature might stand up  
And say to all the world, "This was a man!" "

And truly to know George was to love him, to work along side him an inspiration, to act meanly in his presence a rebuke. He had a quietness, a delicacy, a strength and beauty, alike of soul and body that placed him above his fellows; and yet a simplicity, a smiling frankness, that won all hearts. One would overhear expressions such as "I have never seen anyone like Geordie." He was to have been a physician; and what a physician he would have made! Nay, what a physician he was, for even remembering him one feels better.

Somehow at this time it all seemed so particularly wrong, the war, so intensely wicked; a gigantic, wholesale error; that man like this should be struck down in their bloom. The agony of Belgium, the sinking of the Lusitania, these after all were events read of in the newspapers; but the taking of proved and beloved comrades, of men with hearts of gold and characters of such beauty as to make oneself seem ugly; this was when, to the individual breasts of comrades, the war struck home.



## PART IV.



### CHAPTER I.

#### THE END OF THE SUMMER

The departure from the delightful surroundings of Hersin during such ideal weather gave one a similar feeling to the packing up after a happy summer vacation. To be relinquished were the quiet coloured end-of-the-evenings enjoyed from the tent or the bivvy, the walks through the cool shadows of the winding paths, the surreptitious peeps in the fruit garden and the many and varied recreations which placed the war in the background and almost recovered the days of peace. The summer rest closed with happy memories of an ideal camp; each and all were consciously satisfied with the rest and freedom enjoyed. Hersin Chateau, though no farther actually from the line than the La Haie Hospital, appeared so by reason of its seclusion and separation from the main line of traffic. During the month of rest the Unit dealt with seven hundred and eighty sick and wounded, whilst Captain Grant's Staff operated on six hundred and forty dental patients.

In returning to La Haie Hospital there was no question but that the XIth preferred this camp to the Four Winds, even though the return implied work. More than this there was great talk of an advance on our front in the near future. Dame Rumour was extraordinarily busy in these days. She found most victims when she had half facts to work upon. Whisperings of "umpteenth Divisions going over" seemed never to disturb the methodical equanimity of routine work which settled on the camp as soon as the kits were dumped. It seemed as easy to resume work in the old camp as to smile in a pay parade. Fatigues—even work—became much less irksome with the chance of a game of tennis during the day.

"Tennis?" Yes—and why not? To the 8th Canadian Field Ambulance must be given the credit for laying out the court whilst occupying the camp. But racquets and ball were needed. Captain Kerr and Captain Stirling rose to the occasion by purchasing at Bethune a set of racquets, while the generosity of the Y.M.C.A. supplied the balls. During these glorious summer days some great games were played on this wartime court and many an old-timer was persuaded to give an exhibition of his famous fancy strokes. It was unfortunate but inevitable that the arranged tournament among the men should have petered out. Sad to relate, the gallows on which it met its death was the working party.

The term "working party" to an Infantryman might mean anything from fixing barbed wire in No-Man's-Land to road sweeping whilst in rest at Auchel, Bruay or any of those hospitable little villages behind the lines. The term in the Ambulance generally implied work, but tempered with the elements of novelty and variety. A trip from the Chateau to Souchez for bricks or to Angres for lumber, was comparable to a picnic. The consolidated school vans of the prairie could not have jolted merrier loads than the G.S. wagons and limbers to and from these places in the sunny days of August and September.

Following these minor operations in busy spots out of the danger zone, the powers that be decided that the little village of Avion, then a place of disputed possession, would profit by an Arbor Day celebration. With customary zeal "A" and "B" sections in turn raised such a dust in cleaning out the cellars in this little health resort that the enemy thought it expedient to cool the ardour of these very fresh Ambulance men by presenting them occasionally with a bouquet of whizz-bangs. Besides

the incidental enemy fire, at times there proceeded from the cellars a burst of laughter or an explosion of side-splitting mirth. Once it was Dooley Wells making a queer "eratur" of himself, having discovered a suit of civvies. On another occasion it was Kenyon inviting Patterson to interview a Boche raiding party. The marauding salvage party not only successfully evaded enemy fire but conveyed back to camp in triumph numerous souvenirs; vases, volumes of French Authors, china tea-sets and what not—palpable evidence of a clean-up somewhere. No doubt many of these discoveries now repose in cherished collections of relics of the old war.

The institutions of mock parliament at this time evoked interest and enthusiasm, simultaneously creating a great deal of mirth. The opportunity for speech-making was keenly accepted by the embryo parsons and budding bachelors of law. There were to be no themes or questions of national importance too great or too small for mock-parliamentary consideration. Witness the first question discussed by parliament. "That no one be permitted to attend any negotiations held between the belligerent powers other than a legally authorized representative of the British Nation during the period of hostilities." This statement, of course, is a most brief synopsis of the long harangue commencing, "Whereas———" Symptoms of acute forensic acumen were manifest in the telling remarks of the member from Bull Creek. Members from similar constituencies provided the house with indigestible facts during the session, but the climax of the debate was reached when, by a fine strategic move, the speaker prevented the impeachment of the member from Morden. That fractious character had achieved notoriety in, so far as he had been implicated in the publication and circulation of a most seditious and revolutionary paper known as "M. & D." It is worthy of note that this person never again stood for the Constituency of Morden.

Later, when a stormy evening chanced, the opportunity was seized to settle the problem of taxing the bachelors of the Empire. Unfortunately the initial proceedings were handicapped. When a Cabinet meeting was called, it chanced that some of the members were in a delicate position. Owing to a strenuous session several members of the House had been sent to the Riviera to recuperate. Because they had overstayed their leave they were cast into the "clique" to expiate their crime. Consequently the only thing left to the Cabinet was to suffer the indignity of assembling with their confreres in the "clique." Oddly enough, the proceedings were conducted shamelessly, brazenly, in this place of evil repute, but it is to their everlasting credit that no mention of the fact was made to the members of the House on assembly. After a short debate the resolution was almost unanimously carried that these parasites of the Empire should be bled. At the conclusion of the session the motion for future discussion was read, "That His Majesty's Government place on record its determination to adhere to its policy of Free Trade."

On the eleventh of August the Unit had completed a year on Active Service. Only the most pessimistic of the originals ever believed he would experience in France the anniversary of his arrival in the country. But the twelve months had held a wealth of incident and had made great changes, both in the Unit and in the men. The big things in life had been met and faced squarely. In one year boys had developed into capable men, men had become bigger, broader and more sympathetic, even retouched with the spirit of youth. In labours both rough and smooth, in pursuits arduous and happy, friendships founded on a respect and regard for the best in men, had built up a Corps comradeship. Through such experiences the average man had realized indeed the force of the motto of the R.A.M.C. "*In arduis Fidelis*". Esprit-de-corps had grown; men had come fully to realize responsibilities; higher tone and efficiency marked each new achievement, and all was in no small measure due to the Commanding Officer, Lt. Col. McQueen. He himself had been often heard to remark that "War was a great game and called for big men to play it." But the game progressed with no sign of a finish; there was harder work ahead, harder than had hitherto been dreamed of.

The picquet parading the camp on the morning of the eleventh confidently states that the morning broke in glorious splendour. 'Tis true there were a few showers, but they merely served to render the sunshine more glorious. But France is France and rain is rain and ever the two will greet. Where possible all duties for the day were suspended. In the morning "C" section assembled all the original members present and marched to Camblain L'Abbe to be photographed; the original members of "B" section had already done the same while at Hersin and "A" followed suit a few

days later. Games of tennis and football occupied the afternoon till four o'clock, when the climax of the day was reached with an anniversary dinner. Little more need be said about the meal except that at the time of writing, after a lapse of six months, it is possible to recall each course; the delicate flavour of the soup with the cubes of toasted bread; Nobby Clark's chef-d'oeuvre—beef roasted to a turn, potatoes and cauliflower, the whole crowned by Sergeant Weber's masterpiece of vanilla ice cream and biscuits. Surely years must elapse before the memory of the crowded hut and the jolly medley of feasting faces will be obliterated. If the men were regaled with these delights the reader may, by a process of simple proportion, divine the tempting dishes Cook McKenzie placed before the Sergeants, or faintly imagine the triumphs of culinary science which Billy Brown prepared for the Officers.

After dinner an impromptu smoker drew every man into the end hut. With the good wishes of the C.O., the presence of Captain Kerr and his friend, Lieut. Edwards, the wit of the chairman, the satiety of songs, cigarettes and cigars, not to mention the freely dispensed lemonade (?), how could this memorable evening fail to be a success? The Sergeant-Major with a brief foreword presented home-made graduation parchments to the men who had been admitted to the baccalaureate at the recent march convocation. He of the "Old Bill" features, "Dad" Fletcher, was at the piano and Jack Donnelly in full song, everyone listened keenly to the topical allusions parodied in "Twas just a year ago today." Grigg's pathetic ballad "Never More" was heartily encored, but his only other turn was so well known that he hesitated before complying with the famous "Moo-Cow-Moo." Lieut. Edward's rousing self-accompanied songs were the cream of a delightful evening, one of the happiest times the Unit had enjoyed since its organization.

The next day being Sunday, a working party was detailed to proceed to the site of a new Main Dressing Station on the Souchez-Angres road. After an early breakfast the men were away and the G.S. wagons once more took up the old rhythmic jolt with their loads of humanity. By a brilliant strategic move Captain Stirling deployed the party from Hospital Corner to Ablain. It was fortunate for the horses that the load was a movable one, otherwise the wagons would have been mired yet. After filling the wagons with picks and shovels the party proceeded to the appointed spot known as Jenk's Siding. For the next few weeks the XIth worked in co-operation with the XIIth in levelling a piece of ground pitted with shell-holes and interwoven with old trenches. Navvying seemed to be the order of the day. Whilst one party levelled the ground, another constructed inclined roads forming an exit and entrance to and from the main road. A third party worked in Souchez obtaining bricks from the demolished houses and walls so that the roads in the hospital might be given a hard surface. This fact was appreciated when the Unit took over the finished camp in December. During the house-breaking operations in Souchez a number of French civilians, having obtained permission, returned to find the treasure they had buried when the first Boche patrols were known to be in the district at the commencement of hostilities.

On August 15th, fifty men were detailed to stand-by to assist the XIIIth Canadian Field Ambulance in evacuating the wounded from the forward area during the coming advance. Fortunately the casualties were so slight that the forward Ambulance was able to cope with the wounded so that after three days the men of the XIth were released. During these operations all the sick of the Division were being cleared to La Haie where, in addition to the fact that a third of the Medical personnel were standing by, one hundred and seventy patients were being cared for in the hospital.

Often it had been grouchingly remarked that the policy pursued by the Army was calculated so to pester men that their tempers might be as sorely tried as possible. But it is worth noting how much is needed really to ruffle the temper of a man who has done a year up and down the line. Obviously these remarks cannot apply to men who, for months on end have been comfortably ensconced in cosy billets back at the base, nor to men who have held a luxurious bed-sitting-room in an Estaminet for the duration. But that has nothing to do with the fact that the Ordnance people wanted the marquees returned to them, and this meant that two sections and the Horse Transport were left to their own resources for shelter. Immediately there were search parties in all directions for lumber, canvas, poles, or anything, in fact, which would help in the construction of shelters for one, or more men. By noon, the marquees were struck and packed and the clover patch at the rear of the camp was hidden by a motley array of odd designs and crude constructions known as "bivvies," their ap-

pearance varying from that of a wood pile to a coffin. There was an almost grotesque individuality about some, which must have been most heart-breaking to the Orderly officer. Nevertheless "bivvy" life was most satisfactory to the man's idea of seclusion and comfort even though he had to crawl on all fours into his home. Generally speaking, beyond keeping the inside clean and tidy, relaxed restrictions permitted great scope for invention and decoration in housekeeping. In some the walls were decorated with anything from the cover of the Saturday Evening Post or a Kitchener Girl to a Gainsborough or Rubens.

A momentary gloom hovered over the Unit when it became known that in a day or two Col. McQueen would relinquish his command of the Unit. A man's value and influence is never discovered till it is lost, and not till the moment of losing his command did most of the Unit realize what the Colonel had been to it. He could not be allowed to go without some celebration in his honour, so that on the evening of the 30th, when Billy Brown's skill had been put to the test for the occasion and the band of the 54th had been installed in the Sergeants' Mess, a spread was laid and toasts were drunk which possibly made the Officers wish that Colonels would leave every day.

Very early the following morning, with the O.C.'s of sections at their posts, the Colonel made his farewell speech to the Unit. Speaking in a louder voice than was usual with him he expressed his regret at the thought of leaving, and stated that it was not until that moment he realized what deep regard and attachment he really had for the Unit. He expressed his appreciation of the manner in which the Officers, N.C.O.'s and men had worked with him, and his hope that the same loyalty would be accorded to his successor, Major Moshier.

There loomed ahead like some big object in a mist the vision of the next advance on Lens. Indistinct and indefinite, the scheme was whispered from man to man. Operations were practically complete; each gun had its objective down to a nicety. These rumours received added weight as little groups gathered at the Chateau to study the clay model of the Avion and Sallaumines areas. With eager interest the little groups of spectators conversed over the proposed plan of operations. On that side of the tape was to be Nth Division, on this side was the 4th. The three tapes, one in advance of the other, represented the objectives of the three Brigades. In whispers men told of the impregnable fortress of enemy machine guns at the Railway Cutting. Everything seemed to be ready and merely the date to be fixed. Contributory to this, men of the XIth had been preparing Dressing Stations at Avion and La Coulotte. Major Moshier, in company with Lt. Col. Bell of the XIIth Canadian Field Ambulance, then in charge of the forward area, made a tour of the R.A.P.'s and A.D.S. posts.

As on other momentous occasions; it seemed likely that the XIth would again find itself in charge of the evacuation from the forward area. Without a doubt the men were in fine physical condition and quite fit for the strenuous demands about to be made upon their powers of endurance. In any case the term of respite was about over. Once again the bivvy and the ball had to be exchanged for the trench and the stretcher. Such antitheses, however, made up the life in France.

All in all, this period of back area work with its hospital duties and various recreations proved most conducive to the growth and development of that "bon camaraderie" upon which the Unit prided itself. The multifarious duties incidental to hospital work impressed men with the absolute importance of cleanliness and order, gave them a further training in the care of sick men, and encouraged them in the art of sympathy and tact to the mutual advantage of themselves and their patients. Often it was just this touch which made a patient feel he was in good hands when with the XIth; so much after all did the good name of the Unit depend upon the individual himself.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE BEGINNING OF WINTER

With all preparations apparently complete for the offensive at Lens nothing could have been more startling to the Canadian Units than to find that they were being suddenly withdrawn from the Lens area. Was the attack abandoned, was it postponed, or what was the reason? The first few incidents were all evidence backing up the new rumors. First one battalion then another passed with loaded transport in the early morning, disturbing the uneasy slumbers of the patients in the La Haie Hospital. At ten

o'clock the same morning, October 5th, the A.D.M.S. visited the hospital to direct the immediate evacuation of all patients either to duty or to the C.C.S. All the horse ambulances and cars were used in the disposition of one hundred and fifty patients. The next day the unit with all its impedimenta moved off to temporary quarters at Fosse 9, near Barlin. By that time the remainder of the division had been already transferred to this area. It is on such occasions as these that one sees and is impressed with the perfection of the Army organization and the work of the General Staff; simply an absolute reliance on a system based on perfect obedience to law, which ensures that thousands of men with all their personal goods pack, move and resettle in a new locality in an incredibly short space of time; a system permitting neither a gap in the firing line nor a vacancy in any post or station.

The Unit reached Fosse 9 in a heavy shower. With the band leading, the transport bringing up the rear and all men wearing their ground sheets, the Unit moved up the main street of the little mining village under the hill overlooking Barlin. Except for the quarters in the hospital which B section took over, there was no accommodation for the remainder of the Unit. Billets had to be sought in the houses of the inhabitants, people who were for the most part refugees from the Lens area and who now worked in the adjacent mine. The Ambulance men settled down immediately to the novel experience of being quartered with civilians. Some men indeed experienced the joy of a real "prehistoric" bed. All partook of the hospitable cup of "café" from madame, but not all were so fortunate in getting the "café au rhum" or their breakfast in bed. One cheery transport driver remarked, when comparing this life with that of tents: 'It's a change from the usual hang-your-hat-on-the-floor stunt, anyway.' Here, too, for the first time, the Ambulance men performed the peculiar duties of Regimental-Patrol. How or where these patrols wandered in the dark rainy hours may yet remain a mystery. At any rate, at the end of the duty, each man was mightily glad to throw off his soaked clothing and roll in between the blankets.

Iron rations, always symbolical of the heavy marches or "over the top with the best o' luck," were released from the custody of the section stewards. A muster parade, called no doubt to see if any man had changed his number, name or religious persuasion, brought everyone to the parade ground outside the hospital at 10 a.m., on Monday. Except for a kit inspection and a bath parade at the mine, the men were left unmolested. The inspection was possibly introduced to see how quickly a man could scrape up an iodine ampule, and the bath parade to give Captain Stirling a chance to lose the Unit.

Having been at Fosse 9 from the 5th to 12th of October, the Unit received orders to move off at 6 a.m. next morning for Bruay. The advanced party under Sergeant Morrison proceeded in ambulance cars to the new camp. The horse transport made its way by road whilst the medical personnel of the Unit entrained at Bruay with the 12th Brigade. The train journey was like all others except that the 40 hommes limit was exceeded and that the distance was comparatively short. It was always a toss-up whether a man would exchange the comfort of the box car for the exercise of the route march, but he was never permitted the choice. By noon the arrival at Steenbeck station, the destination, gave each man the chance to straighten his neck, remove the kink from his back and gain a vertical position.

Euclid states that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. General Staffs affirm that the line takes the form of the letter M. At the end of a march the men unanimously conclude that the object has been to fool the natives, since a unit passes its ultimate destination in the train going north, disembarks and marches in all directions tending south in order that amateur spies may report that the troops are coming instead of going and vice versa. Curiously enough the road to Houleron passed under the railway line from Lillers to Hazebrouck and two men coming from leave in a train passing overhead saw what would have been their fate had they returned from leave sooner.

On this march the band helped considerably. By ringing the changes on a few stock tunes and drum solos the tedium of the journey was decidedly lessened. Nevertheless the march through the winding lanes and along the quiet canal banks took almost three hours. Till this time, the Unit had not been supplied with a Field-kitchen as were the battalions who were thus enabled to line up for a hot meal on the road. Usually the meal was prepared after the arrival of the men, who either waited around hungry and cold or in desperation went out to seek eggs and chips. On this occasion, however, the cooks went ahead and a hot meal awaited the men on their arrival.

The billets were located near the manufacturing town of Isberques. At night the overhead sky was vividly illuminated by the flames from the furnaces and the brilliant arc lights used in the foundries. Incidentally these lights were a perfect landmark for the enemy aviator who often bombed the town at night. There were few casualties among the natives, however, because whenever an approaching plane was signalled, each and every inhabitant disappeared into his or her own funk hole. The enemy declined to encounter the wind and rain that night when the Unit was curled up in the straw.

Early the next morning, reveille hauled the men from their cozy beds in the lofts, and assembling at 7.30 a.m., moving off at 8 a.m., towards Cassel, they reached a farm near Oxeleare about midday. Here all three Sections were accommodated in a large airy barn overlooking the biggest midden in France. All the billets were situated around this manure heap, the officers being separated from it merely by a low wall. To the lowliness of this wall one must attribute the official disapproval of naked lights in the opposite barn and a subsequent confinement to barracks of the offenders.

By this time, for very obvious reasons, keen interest was taken in the proceedings of the battle beyond Ypres. The Australian Forces holding part of the line had, with great effort, made good progress toward the Ridge of Passchendaele, the ultimate objective of the push in that area. From reports of men who knew the situation, it was clear that a Division could not last out longer than twelve or fourteen days at a stretch. New storming troops must take their place, and so far as one could judge the Canadian Corps would go in next. At what precise moment the Divisions would be needed perhaps no one knew. All units therefore were confined to their quarters till more mature plans had been prepared. On the evening of the 13th, the detention being lifted, the men surveyed the countryside in the neighbourhood of the camp. Some wandered through the damp leaf-covered lanes. Others found the acceptable warmth of a farmer's fire, and one or two chanced upon the artist refugee from Ypres. The remainder headed direct for either Hazebrouck or Cassel. Until definite movement orders arrived the usual daily camp routine was observed. Physical "jerks", company and squad drill were carried out on the large meadow adjoining the farm, whilst Sections made route marches through the neighbouring roads and lanes.

The daily round of events came to an abrupt end on the morning of the 19th when the Sergeant Major assembled the Sections then drilling in various parts of the meadow. He announced that each man must be prepared to move off at an hour's notice. When dismissed from the parade everyone busied himself with cleaning up the camp and packing kit. By 10 o'clock the whole Unit moved off, not toward Ypres, but to change camps with the XIIIth Canadian Field Ambulance. The new billets, at Maison Blanche, were reached by 11.30, the whole movement being considered as a smart performance. The new quarters were close to the Ypres-St. Omer road, a high-way stretching straight and level for miles, always busy with heavy traffic over its cobbled surface. It presented a unique impression of the needs of an army during an advance. Despatch riders flashed by in both directions, empty lorries rattled back to the railhead at St. Omer, streams of loaded vehicles rumbled on towards Ypres via Cassel and Poperinghe; staff cars of various builds whizzed past continuously giving glimpses of the "Tabs" in action; a battery of guns clattered back for repairs; a line of transport ambled along the side of the road interspersed with occasional peasants' drays. Frequently a ma'mselle tripped down to the estaminet, giving the glad eye to the cop on the corner, who looked with envy at the Tommy heading for the same rendezvous.

At midnight of the 19th a despatch rider from the A.D.M.S. arrived with orders that an advance party of the Unit would go forward by motor lorries to Ypres at 7 o'clock the next morning. The horse transport of one Section together with the other two ambulance wagons would follow. At 4.30 a.m. next day the detailed party shook the straw from their hair, breakfasted, packed, made their way to the waiting lorries and piling into the four vehicles settled down to their thirty kilometre trip. Falling into line, the lorries added to the already mighty stream of traffic on what was probably the busiest highway in the world. Wending its way up the steep hill leading to Cassel, the lorry stream passed through this historic town resting on the height and overlooking pleasant meadows and woodlands beneath. Down the hill on the other side of the town, the lorries soon came in view of Steenvoorde, the village in which the Unit had encamped on its third day in France, and through which they now sped towards Abeele, a town famous for lace and "chips". Skirting around the old camp at Wippenhoek, the lorries made their way on to Poperinghe, thence on to Flamer-tinge and Ypres where the convoy pulled up in the confusion of men, traffic and guns in the suburbs of the town. Led by Captain MacKinnon, the party filed across the

bridge and into the square under the ruined Cloth Hall and Cathedral—those historic war-tragedies in stone paralleled only by the devastated Cathedrals of Albert and Rheims.

The headquarters of the evacuating system used by the XIth were in the old prison at Ypres then used by the 9th Australian Field Ambulance as a Corps Dressing Station for walking wounded and local casualties. To these quarters A and B Sections were taken after waiting by the empty lorries for half an hour—a perilous proceeding it was afterwards discovered since the enemy shelled this spot periodically. The men of B Section, after eating a hasty meal on their arrival at the prison slipped into their light equipment and prepared to go into the forward posts. The Cadillac cars were detailed to take the boys up the to Switch Road, passing on the way the ruins of the Cathedral and the Menin Gate. Speeding down the Zonnebeke Road past the A.D.S at Potizic, known as the White Chateau, the bearers disembarked at the Switch. Beyond this point they passed two other Collecting Posts, Bavaria House and Frost House. The latter was a "pill box" on the side of the road where cases were transferred from the Horse ambulances to the cars.

Whilst awaiting orders at Frost House an opportunity presented itself in which the party might survey the whole battlefield as it lay before them open and bare. In some respects it resembled the Somme ahead of Pozieres. Long-rolling hills stripped bare of all herbage and dwellings, where every square yard of the earth's surface had been thrown over to a depth of five or six feet by exploding shells, formed a bleak and miserable panorama of mud and ooze. The other battlefield had the advantage on two points; here the pill boxes were the only shelters and the shelling was five or six times as fierce. There were several wrecked tanks within sight. They were an indication of the progress made five weeks before when the offensive on this section was launched from a mile or so in the rear. Just how far the enemy had since been driven, could hardly be determined. At all events as far as the eye could see in the gathering dusk, the lorries still moved up and down the road ahead. To the left three lines of hill-tops could be distinguished. The nearer two were in our possession whilst the third whose summit overlooked the whole countryside, was still in the enemy's hands. This was the dreaded Passchendaele Ridge.

During the afternoon the guns on all sides had been comparatively quiet, but with the approach of dusk their activity increased, till at the time when the B men had finished their survey at Frost, the bombardment was quite intense. This proved to be the usual evening truce; truly the Devil's Angelus. The Australians were most expressive in their thankfulness for relief, but owing to the increasing darkness the relief of the forward posts was postponed till next morning. Those of the Section who found no shelter at night in any of the pillboxes near Frost chose to make their way back to Ypres, but Hamilton and Currel of C Section, rather than tramp the distance slept in one of the wrecked tanks.

At 6 o'clock on the morning of the 21st, the B Section advance party set out, each squad loaded with a stretcher, two blankets, water and rations. With an Australian M.O. as guide, four squads proceeded to Zonnebeke post, two miles ahead. By evading the wobbling line of mules, by diving in and out among the lorries, by skirting the shell holes and by keeping the balance on the slippery plank road, the party reached the Zonnebeke turning in safety. Leaving the main road the party turned down the mule track, a corduroy path under the shelter of the railway embankment. The men picked their way over the loose piles of ammunition belonging to nearby batteries, filed round the many wrecked guns and eventually reached the Relay Post, a pillbox on the site of the one-time railway station. Since the squads to be relieved had already gone back, the B squads were compelled to forgo any helpful information that might have been handed over concerning short cuts, good paths, or dangerous spots, for up to the present there was but little indication of the difficulties ahead.

Leaving two squads to man Zonnebeke post the other eight men went forward to Thames, a pillbox nine hundred yards ahead along the railway embankment which at least bore semblance to a route. The captured pillboxes used as relays and Aid Posts were all of a kind; a concrete shell from two to four feet in thickness giving one a sense of security if not comfort. When a Battalion M.O. and his staff occupied the meagre space inside an R.A.P. it was up to the Ambulance men to fix up some kind of a shelter for themselves outside. This was often done by building a lean-to along the rear wall with the aid of sand bags and stretchers. Once settled inside this cover, the boys felt themselves part and parcel of the evacuating scheme to clear the wounded through the eight miles of treacherous waste to the rear.

According to the operation orders issued by the A.D.M.S. on October 10th, the clearing system and the prison at Ypres were to be under the direction of the Commanding Officer of the XIth. Captains MacKinnon, Stirling, Kerr and McClenahan were to remain at the prison, Major McKillop, with Captains Blair and Walsh to remain at the White Chateau to supervise work between that place and the prison, whilst Captain Turnbull was to control the work in the forward area. Slight alterations were made in the dispositions of the Ambulance Officers as occasions arose.

### CHAPTER III.

#### PASSCHENDAELE

Passchendaele, the goal of the Canadian troops had to be reached by a series of objectives. Each of these were allotted to the various Brigades of the Corps. To them was given the honor of storming the citadel towards which the Australians and Imperials had pressed for the previous forty days.

Throughout the whole of Sunday the 21st, battalions and batteries, transports and ammunition, corps and columns, moving in both directions, scraped and rubbed past each other in the densely packed thoroughfares between Ypres and Poperinghe. The Canadian Third and Fourth Divisions moved in to complete the disposition of troops in the front and support lines. During the afternoon, C Section of the XIth arrived by motor busses. The town of Ypres was, at that time, being shelled heavily. In the scramble towards the prison J. A. Cooper received a slight head wound. Later in the day the remainder of the transports arrived after a thirty kilometre march from Bavinchove. The dilatory progress from Poperinghe to Ypres was most irritating. Due to the dense traffic, stopping and starting, it was close upon seven o'clock before the transport arrived at the Asylum. From this point the block was still more evident, for all traffic had been directed down a side route on account of enemy shelling on the main route and the square. The transport arrived at the prison hungry, tired, and as one driver said: "Too savage to cuss decent; for," he continued, "most of the gang were rattled that night." Fritz sent over all the samples he had. He came over in his airplanes and dropped the biggest and best all around—in fact, as the Scottie says, "It was a large evening." Another driver, who confessed that "his back hair was curling in great shape" said that "being an old timer with Fritz didn't help much when you nodded to him after a few weeks' absence." No damage was inflicted upon any of the Transport, but the Town Major gave orders for an immediate retreat. The next morning at 6 a.m. the whole outfit moved back to Brandhoek.

In order to make a survey of the forward evacuating area, the A.D.M.S., Colonel Peters, visited the White Chateau where Captain Turnbull offered to show him the posts and bearer routes. Arriving at Zonnebeke he expressed his surprise at the difficulties under which the men had to carry on. He saw the condition of the routes and learned that they had been using shell-hole water unboiled. In considering the problem he remarked, "I fail to see how you manage to do it." Suddenly spying a dozen or so petrol cans filled with fresh water which someone had apparently left unguarded he said: "Well! Look over there—run across and get a couple of those." Springing from nowhere, with a voice of threatening doom, an undersized infantryman said, "Like Hell you will! We've got to get that lot up the line and we've tumped 'em fifteen miles already!" Colonel Peters would have been yet more surprised and amused had he seen the S.O.S. messages of "B" Section's O.C., which demanded answer to three things: "Are we still attached to the XIth Ambulance? When can we have some rations? and, When may we expect relief?" The transportation of rations to the furthestmost posts ahead proved itself a problem. It meant that one squad at the relay nearest post had to pack back with them, besides the usual blankets and stretchers, rations and water for themselves and every man ahead.

It was fortunate that on the arrival of the "B" men at Thames R.A.P. there were no wounded left unevacuated, especially as only one section held down these many posts and relays between Thames and Frost. It was not long before the regimental stretcher squads brought cases from the line to the R.A.P.

But a wounded man's troubles are not over by any means even though he may be on a stretcher, for there is much uncertainty and unavoidable discomfort between an R.A.P. and M.D.S.; the case once on their shoulders, the primary consideration of the bearers was to find the best route. With an eye to the general direction and an



car for approaching shells the squad picked its circuitous way along the edges of the shell holes on the embankment from Thames to Zonnebeke. Transferring the human burden to the shoulders of the waiting squad, the one squad returned to Thames while the other made its way to Levi. For this treacherous corner no one had a particular liking. In times of a rush or when artillery activity was very slight the patient would be taken by way of the mule track towards the main road to meet the Horse Ambulance. During the first few days the regular relay lay between Zonnebeke and Levi, a fairly short and easy carry. Arriving at Levi, the waiting squad turned out of their shelter at the back of the pillbox used by the Brigade Signallers. Without further ado the two squads would disappear from the skyline, the one back to Zonnebeke, and the other with the patient across to Mitchell's Post. One of the most dreaded carries this, not from the point of difficulty alone, but also from the frequency of enemy shelling. About half way across lay a bog which had to be skirted by passing round a row of poplar stumps. Between this and Mitchell's an effort had been made to span with a few planks, a small stream in an oozy swamp. It mattered little whether these planks were used, the general method being to wade through the stream. With tolerable luck this relay could be made in three quarters of an hour. The patient, taken over by the relieving squad at Mitchell's, had next to face the treacherous mile of country across to Frost's. With its surer footing and clearer path, this carry would have been the best but for the fact that the second half of the route passed behind the 8" batteries just off the road. To linger in this area would have spelt suicide, for only too often did the enemy open up on these positions. Arriving breathless at Frost after a carry of forty minutes the squad would lay the patient under the pillbox wall for shelter, and rest here for a few minutes before returning. McKenzie or Jackson in the little cook-house at the rear provided both bearers and patient with hot tea or coffee. Walking cases following the squad were often left to their own resources. Many a time these "walkers" received second wounds coming out of the line.

The Horse Ambulance usually made its trip up to Bremen House for cases about every two hours. These may have been local cases or brought from Thames via Zonnebeke. On its return to Frost, all the cases were first seen by the M.O. and then transferred to waiting cars. A speedy trip of a few minutes brought them to the White Chateau. Here the M.O. re-examined them. He retained those whose wounds needed immediate attention, and filled the vacant places in the cars with those whom he had already dressed. From here the car sped down to Ypres. There was only room for two cases to be dressed at one time in the dressing room at Potijze. There was accommodation for no more than three stretcher cases or about a dozen walking wounded. It was neither intention nor good policy to hold casualties here for longer than could be helped. The place was kept as clear as possible at all times. For this purpose cars of the three Ambulances together with those of the 14th Motor Ambulance Convoy were utilized. Often a lorry bumping its way back to Ypres was stopped and walking wounded filed inside so that they might the more speedily get further attention at the prison. Mainly, alternate squads of A Section men held down the work at the White Chateau. The work was not light, and only he who has spent a couple of days continuously loading and unloading stretchers from ambulances, can appreciate the arm-aching and back-aching which results.

For three days B Section alone had been clearing the aid posts whilst the troops in the trenches were changing over. A number of the XIth Ambulance bearers had been detailed to go forward as a relief for the men of the XIth. Before their arrival, owing to failure of the supply of rations, some of the B men had been forced to eat their iron rations. For once they had been disposed of in legal fashion. When the relieving party arrived, the men began to make their way back to Ypres late in the afternoon of Tuesday. At times during their carrying, the men had come in contact with the new enemy mustard-gas shells. Its blistering effects upon the tender parts of the skin and its weakening effects upon the lungs were now being felt. Darkness fell rapidly as the men followed in the trail of Sergeant Field. It needed a keen eye and a developed sense of location to avoid getting away from the home trail. With true Indian-like cunning, Field, peering through the blackness for a tree stump or pillbox likely to afford a clue to position and direction, eventually brought the party safely out at Frost's. Many a man following up the trail would have fallen out but for the thought that a shake-down at the prison was preferable to a night in the mud. The long tedious journey from Frost was seldom done on foot. In most cases the returning bearers would jump a lorry on its way to Ypres. Wells and "Stony" Thompson, a more original type, each selected one of the best looking stray mules on the road and rode back

in state to the prison, where they handed over the prize of war to the Transport Officer. The arrival of the men at the prison gave opportunities for a stimulant, a change of socks, a clean up and a good sleep. This was the first occasion on which some of the men had sampled the rum issue; its virtue undeniably proved in its use. Whilst the XIth Ambulance held down the forward posts the men were able to take a better view of their headquarters.

The prison was situated at the north-west corner of the town. Bounded on the north and west by open fields. The large east gate opened on the cobbled main street. The whole building had been surrounded octagonally by a high brick wall. Owing to the numerous bombardments only in one or two places did a whole strip of wall exist. The Prison buildings were among the few structures which remained intact until the latter bombardments of August and September. The eastern side of the prison had been demolished from the roof to the first storey. The iron staircases which led to the upper stories from the main corridors, appeared so much scrap iron. Large pieces of masonry balancing on dizzy heights threatened to tumble down with the least shake. Only when heavily protected by sandbags could the rooms on the ground and second floors be used. The orderly room and officers' quarters of the XIth occupied part of the ground floor, whilst the tunnels and cellars beneath, though cramped, afforded good bomb-proof sleeping quarters and dressing rooms. A roomy underground rotunda, 30 feet in diameter, in the centre of the building, approached from three entrances, made a first class dressing room for walking wounded. Seats and benches for the patients were placed around the circumference and all manner of dressings and bandages were stacked for use around the central pillar. Patients entered from the road into the tunnel where records and cards were made out for them, whence they proceeded to the rotunda where their wounds were re-dressed. A huge supply of rations and medical comforts had been prepared for the coming emergencies. The Y.M.C.A. had established a booth at the exit to provide the wounded with free coffee, biscuits, cigarettes and chocolate. Sandwiches and socks were dispensed with a smile by the ever busy "Smithy" of "Ko Ko" fame. It was a great boon indeed that a dynamo had been installed which illuminated the whole prison with electricity both day and night.

Simultaneously with the work of evacuation from the lines, a sick parade was held daily in a cell on the west side of the prison. It was similar in its general conditions of forlorn helplessness to the huge sick parade at Albert twelve months previous. The whole medical staff of two M.O.s., dispenser, masseur and orderly were kept busy five or six hours each day. The waiting patients huddled together on seats in the corridors, or tucked themselves in odd corners of the passages out of the chill November draughts. Whether the sick man was to be sent to duty or down the line, so he was given either chlorodyne or a Number 9, or else he was transferred by lorry to Brandhoek, the Corps Rest Station.

These sick parades were often a quaint mixture of humor and pathos. The fond hope of the man with a cough who expects to make Blighty is balanced by the fear of the man with trench fever that he may be sent back to the line. Much patience and insight were demanded of the M.O. to discover the actual malady; and in listening to the volunteered history of the complaint one felt that the longer the history the less serious the trouble. One burly Australian standing before the M.O. announced that during the last few days his legs and back had been "crooked", and would the M.O. give him something to "fix it". The perplexed M.O. saw light only when the orderly explained that the Australian term "crooked" was synonymous with the Canadian terms "on the bum" and "on the blink", each term being equivalent to the fact that the man was suffering more or less acutely from some anatomical disorder.

Great consternation prevailed in the Sick Parade one morning when a high wind rattled fragments of balanced masonry on high. Overhead, at one end of the corridor, several large pieces of stonework balanced themselves threateningly forty feet above the waiting men. A sudden crash of falling debris caused a stampede, but the warning was insufficient to prevent one poor fellow from being hit by a piece of stone the size of a full grown marrow. But for his "tin lizzie", a fractured skull would have been the result. There seemed to be no limit to the types and conditions of men who stood in the line-up. Sometimes one sees the odd man with a clean, shaven and smiling face, wearing a well-creased uniform dragged with difficulty from the clutches of the Q.M. With his face aglow with scrubbing and excitement, he waits to be assured officially by the M.O. that he is a fit and proper person to associate with civilians and other non-verminous being whilst on ten days leave.

The average number treated daily at this sick parade was somewhere about two hundred. If you who read this now recollect the time you were diagnosed, treated and disposed of in less than a minute, you will appreciate the point of view of the man in the Sick Parade at Ypres. How Captain Grant and Sergeant Martin carried on their dental work in their two-by-four cubby hole in the draughty end of the corridor will ever remain one of the mysteries of the war; yet they succeeded in giving many a man renewed courage to make an attempt upon a hard-tack biscuit.

A hundred extra bearers were needed for the evacuation of the wounded from the coming attack by the 10th Brigade, so that at 2 a.m. of the 26th October all the available men of B and C Sections paraded for a hasty meal before going forward to clear casualties of the morning's advance. At dawn the attack was to be launched. Lorries which were chartered to bring back the wounded, conveyed the bearers from the prison to the Switch Road half way between the M.D.S. and Potijze where the bearers alighted and picked their way in the darkness through the mud and traffic as far as Frost House. The men were formed into squads each being responsible for carrying a stretcher, two blankets and a trench mat. The whole filed off in the pitch blackness through the revolting chaos of the mile stretch between Frost and Zonnebeke turning. To travel it at night one lost some of its horrors though at the expense of increasing its terrors. The squads were intact till a few hundred yards down the Zonnebeke mule track—a vile and treacherous path. As the middle portion of the long file of men was scrambling over and around the debris of a shattered battery under the embankment, the enemy opened fire on the spot with H.E. Confusion was inevitable. When the shelling had abated it was found that Corporal Harris of the XIth had been instantly killed, Sergeant Musgrove and R. T. Campbell seriously wounded: Pearson, Anderson, Wood, Richards, Williams and Dabbs were also wounded but able to make their way to the Ambulance Post in the rear. J. E. Cooper was wounded in the knee but carried on in spite of it till he was compelled to go down the line as a casualty. It was reported from C.C.S. a couple of days later that R. T. Campbell had died from the effects of his wounds. He was conscientious and full of grit, and although he made but a few intimate friends in the Section, he always made one feel that he had come to do his duty and would stay with it till the last.

During these happenings the remainder of the bearers had gone forward in readiness to receive casualties from the R.A.Fs. Dawn had already broken when the squads reached the posts so that they were ready to receive the casualties from the attack and to carry them out in daylight. The weather was most unfavourable both for the fighter and the Red Cross man, though each experienced it from a different angle. The one could locate his objective and remain there, whilst the other had to traverse the same route back and forth as many times as there were cases. Squelching and sliding down shell holes, at almost every step, burdened with the stretcher, and soaked with a fine rain, the visual sense sickened with the desolation and slime, with corpses of man and beast, the squads were glad to change their relays for a change of scene. When all is told there is little glory in the work of the Ambulance man; it is sheer mulish endurance that achieves the end, the arrival of each patient at the A.D.S. The qualification for a stretcher bearer was aptly quoted by one worthy who defined it as being "broad across the back and narrow between the eyes."

The last four or five days of the month were much the same as the former with their toll of casualties to every unit within range of gun and bomb. Enemy planes played great havoc with our artillery positions in the forward area and with the Headquarters in Ypres. At this time the Gotha was the King of the Air. It seemed impossible to cope with its activity. The back areas on moonlight nights were less desirable than the forward areas. It was at this time that Colonel Irvine, of the 12th Engineers, was killed by a bomb at the entrance of his mess.

On the 29th Captain Peake, of the 79th, a popular M.O. with the boys of the XIth, was gassed with his staff in the pillbox at Thames. Captain Stirling of the XIth accompanied by his batmen, Landry, was detailed to take over the duties of the 78th where heavy work awaited him. Those of the Unit who have heard Bill's description of the little Burial Officer who careered around the district, or the details of his own work in assisting at the post will recollect with amusement the kind of humour with which he could improve an occasion. Did he not make an especially good story of their return to H.Qs. when he related the incident of his Officer's misfortune in a shell hole? One was left to imagine that "Joe" longed with a great longing to be in the neighbourhood of Argyle House.

The records of the Unit at this time showed that the Unit during the month had dealt with 3255 sick and wounded.

On Thursday, November 1st, the whole of the Unit was recalled to H.Q. at the Prison, and the next morning the M.D.S. was handed over to the 6th Field Ambulance whilst the forward area was taken over by the 5th Field Ambulance.

With as little delay as possible, the Unit assembled for roll call in the Prison Yard on the morning of the 3rd and moved off through the now fairly deserted streets of Ypres towards the Rail-head. Here a train waited in readiness to convey the Unit to a more salubrious region in the rear. Many water bottles, judiciously filled, revived the waning spirits of the travellers en route. It was not a particularly happy crowd in exodus from Ypres that day. Nerves had been so highly strung, the strain had been so intense, memories of many a comrade's misfortune was so keen that generally speaking the boys simply gazed on the passing scenery with a forlorn wistfulness, more than assured that they had not yet seen the last of the Salient. It was an unkempt looking crowd, too, that disembarked at Caestre. There had been neither time nor inclination to do more than knock off the largest chunks of mud from the uniform. The shaven face was conspicuous by its absence; the lagging step was evidence of fatigue and lack of sleep. Fortunately, and yet for the first time in the history of the Unit, the men's packs, after being dumped in a heap outside of the town were carried the remaining distance to Hondegheem by the Cadillac cars. By afternoon the Unit reached its destination just outside the town and marched into the large pasture of Wegsche Farm. Although the men had been supplied with a light ration eaten en route, it was the same hungry crowd that hung around the cook-house quarters at mulligan time. Mess tins that had survived the turmoil were held out as usual, but astonishment was most palpable when the officers paraded to the cook-house in a line-up with mess-tins. Heaven only knows—the Q.M. excluded—where they had unearthed them. After the meal the most natural thing to do was to explore the town, either for an estaminet where good cafe or good beer could be sampled, or else for a Y.M. where writing materials, a table and a chair might be found. By good chance Hondegheem supplied them all, for many troops had passed that way.

## CHAPTER IV.

### PASSCHENDAELE AND AFTER

When the preliminaries were over the first serious business was to clean off the stains accumulated in the muddy salient and then to replenish the depleted equipment to be ready for what might follow. But baths on a Belgian farm were as scarce as colonels in a cook-house queue, so means were devised on a large scale. Shallow excavations were made on the slope behind the barn and these, lined with ground sheets, afforded a chance of a tub, with the shelter of a tent for the lucky ones. Water was obtained from the stream nearby and half the Unit was detailed to act as the hot and cold waterworks while the other half cleansed itself. So, Section by Section, the men approached just that much nearer to godliness and regained the self-respect of feeling clean. At the same time Winter clothing was issued, and after the usual routine of polishing and brushing, everyone felt bucked and rejuvenated and more fit to face whatever the immediate future would bring.

All autumnal billets in Flanders are in the same category, and those at Hondegheem were no better than usual. But comment must be made on the sanguine judgment of those who in the previous occupancy had located the cook-house. That cook-house, like most, had been pitched in the muddiest spot of that muddy farmyard. With a fine optimism it had been placed under some trees, little recking the steady persistence of Flanders rain, which fell freely on to bread, hard tack and cooks. With the arrival of meal time most men adopted the expedient of watching for a chance when the line-up would be short to plunge forward in that direction with his mess tin. Then, critically surveying his tins brimming with stew and tea, bread bedaubed with jam and lump of cheese surmounting, all nicely balanced with a facility acquired by long practice he would slide back to his bunk in the barn.

A kit inspection, P.T., route marching and transport loading practice occupied the major portion of each day. The men were otherwise left to their own devices, but with orders to keep in close touch with the camp. Many found a "home" in the village where the appetites both for food and writing could be satisfied. There was much commerce in canned sausage at the canteen. These would be carried off to some accommodating housewife, who for a small consideration, would cook them and supply

the coffee and potato accompaniments. There was always the menace of the Hun planes and little light was wasted on the streets. A journey into the town on one of those dark November nights was a groping business, usually taking the nature of a visit to the concert tent followed by a song or so and a lubricant at the Estaminet, then the return to billets punctuated by bunting into other night birds on their homeward path.

The Editor of the "M. & D." seized the valuable opportunity here afforded and began preparation for a fresh issue long delayed. Censorship at any time made the production of an issue a tedious affair enough and the rapid order of recent events had altogether barred work of this kind. The Staff could be seen at odd times assembled in the dirty back parlour of an Estaminet collecting and shaping oddments of scrap paper which had been handed in to them as literary contributions, but these usually consisted of the odd recordings of phases of tragedy and humour peculiar to the psychology of the trench soldier.

All the time the top question was, "Are we going in again?" or, "When do we go in again?" The answer came on Saturday, November 10th, when it became known that the 4th Division was again ordered to the attack. B Section, Major McKillop commanding, was detailed to act as advance party and to proceed immediately with transport to take over Red Farm from the IVth Field Ambulance. On this day everyone heard with unqualified pleasure that Sergeant Ross was gazetted Lieutenant. Unfortunately it meant his departure from the Unit, but that was so much the better for him, for dire work lay ahead. However, as events turned, he remained with the Unit until the fateful field of Passchendaele was finally left behind by the Canadian Corps.

Sunday, the 11th, was occupied with preparations for moving off. At 2 a.m. on the following morning, in inky darkness and real Flanders weather, the Unit left Hondegheem. Marching to Caestre, where the Unit entrained at 4.25 a.m., Brandhoek was reached two hours later, whence a march of half an hour brought it to Red Farm. This post was quickly taken over and the men, dispersing to comfortable huts, stood to for the imminent duty in the forward area. A party was detailed to take over the Corps Gas Collecting Post from the Vth Field Ambulance. This post was situated farther up the Ypres road on the right. Not without a little feeling of envy was this party rewarded when it marched off for duty at the Gas Collecting Post, for that work looked to be comparatively "cushy". However, their job turned out a rough one and the arrangement was fair enough, for the squads which had borne the brunt of the forward work in the previous trip were first on the list for this duty. During this period nights were made hideous by the enemy bombing raids. The British planes seemed outclassed. At all events, Fritz played a lively tune from the air and every position in the salient and behind received his attention. Although nothing fell near the Farm, sleep was a spasmodic experience, nevertheless, for hospitals and Red Cross establishments were not exactly immune against enemy aircraft attacks. The Monday was enlivened somewhat when a British Spad plane crashed into the Sergeants' Mess while that august body was lurching, and Sergeant Morrison got a comfortable Blighty. No one misunderstood his grin of delight when the M.O. assured him that he would make the trip with a broken fore-arm.

On Tuesday, the 13th, the D.D.M.S. inspected the Unit and orders came for a big party to move forward. Captain Kerr and seventy-three other ranks were detailed to report at the Prison in Ypres. In order to comply with this demand and in consequence of the depleted ranks of the bearer section, it was found necessary that a number of men from the H.T. Section should be used for bearer work and these fell in with the party. Carrying light equipment, water bottle and iron rations the men assembled in the main roadway of the camp. Squads were organized, supplies issued, and word went out to await the arrival of lorries for the first part of the journey. The interval of waiting was a long one and at dusk the men dispersed to the big sleeping but pending the appearance of the lorries. There some snatched a little sleep, but most of the men were wakeful, for imagination is likely to be keen at such a time. It is only the hardest campaigners who can be stolid amid the trying preliminaries of action. During those tense moments before the whistle sounds, the mood of some is to talk excitedly and superficially. Others find it difficult to stand still, and move restlessly here and there from group to group, impatient for the word of command. Others are content to sit or lie quietly, with a mind to conserve energy and strength for the work ahead.

Finally the fall-in sounded and all were packed into lorries which lumbered and bumped along the road toward Ypres, penned in amidst the enormous traffic of war that trailed in never-ending succession along that highway of armies. Fortunately

there was but one leap into the ditch, although the darkness was bad enough for anything. The lorry convoy halted at the gate of the city and with desultory shelling going on, the men marched on without mishap. They slept that night in the deep security of the Prison and in the vast upper storey of the Armoury opposite.

Down in the dark passage ways of the Prison a rest could be had at least, and soon the place was packed with recumbent figures which made a weird scene from the stairway entrance. The gloom in the passages was broken here and there by the murky gleam of solitary candles stuck on tin lizzies or on projecting stones, while men munched hard tack or scribbled the last whizz-bang before going in.

The dressing room staff up stairs busied itself with the wounded who were fast coming in to the big courtyard where the usual apparent confusion reigned. Like most dressing stations it was a medley of sounds—the groans of the suffering, the wheeze of those hit in the lungs, the call for stretcher bearers and requests for something to drink. There was seldom any respite for the M.O.'s and dressers during a push of the magnitude of Passchendaele. The business of evacuating wounded in such cramped and dangerous spots taxed body, mind and soul. Fatigue was forgotten and one was conscious only of a fierce burning of the soles of the feet as one handled the stretchers in the constant endeavour to make space for the stream of new arrivals. The approaching death of some poor lad brings a quick call for the Padre, who is about with his water bottle and cigarettes. Then, after that sad interview and the certificate of the M.O., comes a short trip to the little burial ground in the close vicinity.

Two hours before dawn a party of fifty under Sergeant Brown was drawn up in the courtyard for forward bearer work. They set out in lorries along the Zonnebeke road, through the dense traffic of marching battalions and procession of lorries and ammunition convoys. As before the wreckage of war still flanked the way: wrecked guns, tanks, waggons and lorries pushed aside to make way for the traffic. The roadway was packed with newly made shell holes and marching was slow. The party after pausing at Frost House went on to Zonnebeke and thence north east on duck walk over the muddy shell-broken country to Mitchell Farm, where a number of men remained under Sergeant Carscallen. The remainder, under Sergeant Brown, moved on to Tyne Cot Pill Box.

The traffic of men along the duck walks meant heavy casualties but these were quickly borne off by rapidly assigned infantry bearers. And remark may be made of the good work done at this time by the Divisional Burial Parties, which carried out the work in this area with unusual celerity, thus relieving to that extent the poignancy of the grim circumstances. Having reached the real scene of action the men's nerves were braced and steadied to the situation. A few cases were discovered all ready for evacuation because the infantry bearers had, with prodigious effort managed to clear from the front line during the night. Around the pill box aid post on the lee side, the scant shelter from enemy fire attracted groups of infantrymen most of whom, incapacitated with wounds or sickness, awaited a chance to be escorted back to the dressing station. Squads therefore, each with its burden, were sent in numerical order back over the trail to Mitchell's. Footing was good where the duck board remained intact, elsewhere the path lay through a swimming morass. The carry back to Mitchell's was really not so bad as might have been expected, for the best that organization could do was done and gaps in the boarding were soon filled. When the work slackened, the bearers of the Ambulance found some kind of shelter in a neighbouring pill box containing three compartments, all rather unwholesome after the recent tenure. The available space allowed only for a sitting posture with head bent hard against the roof; nevertheless, it was a decided comfort to know that four feet of re-inforced concrete overhead made the quarters perfectly bomb-proof. During the intervals of waiting those in one compartment played poker, those in the other feasted on their rations, while the Padre in the further compartment did unofficial chaplain duty.

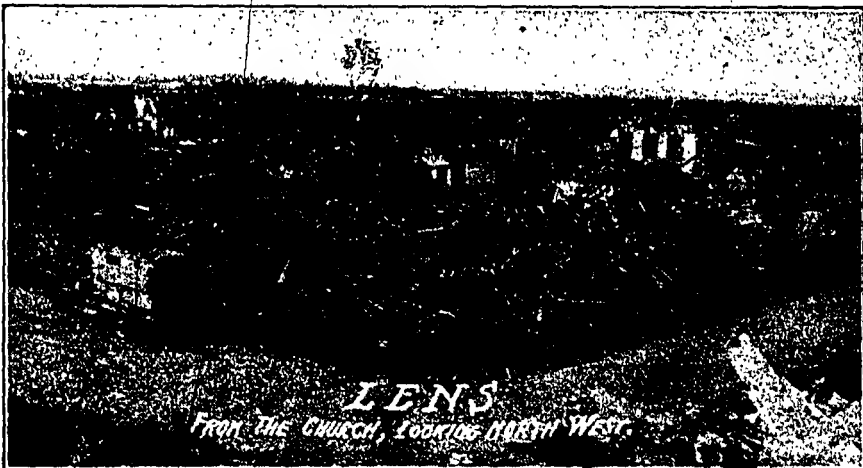
On Wednesday, the 14th, whilst H. Cormick's squad was carrying a case across to Levi's post, a snell landed in the midst of the group. It was a sickening affair; the patient, H. Cormick and Mallough were instantly killed. Of the other two bearers, Mohr was severely shell-shocked and Whittaker was so seriously wounded that he died and was buried at the Australian C.C.S. H. Cormick and Mallough were taken back and buried on the 16th at Brundhoek Military Cemetery.

No further casualties occurred among the bearers that day and the night was quiet except for the fact that about 3 a.m. Sergeant Brown called for squads and gave them a lively time in traversing the space from the aid post, almost missing his way. However, his flash-light served him well and looked good to the German gunners, for they

followed up the Sergeant pretty smartly for a few minutes. That meant a wait, so the squads lay doggo around their patients until the burst died down. It was quite dark and from this point on the ridge, the vast sweep of the Salient was thrown into vivid clearness by the ring of dancing Verey lights everywhere leaping over the enemy lines, for Fritz was ever extravagant with his night lights.

In that point of the Salient the positions could be reached by enemy gun-fire from every angle. It seemed the easiest thing in the world for hostile forces to pinch in at each flank and so to cut off the entire sector. But that is to leave out of account British doggedness. Posterity has yet to measure the grandeur of the defence of the Ypres Salient at the cost of 250,000 British officers and men from all parts of the Empire.

On Thursday, the 15th, relief arrived from the XIIth Field Ambulance about 8 a.m., and the parties returned without incident to the Prison and then on to Red Farm. On the 16th, a further trip into the line was made by a small party of men re-inforcing the XIIth. These returned intact on the 18th. Divisional relief became tangible on that day when an advance party arrived of the XXVth Field Ambulance, R.A.M.C. The Corps Gas Collecting Station was also taken over by them. On the 19th, at 6 a.m., the Unit left Red Farm, travelling by train to Luna Park, where it remained under canvas until the 21st. The 17th was a lucky day for Gray of B Section, who that morn-



ing had been notified to report to Argyle House, London, to take up his Chaplaincy. He had become very popular in the Unit by his powers of staying with the job, so that no one was anything but pleased that he at last was being rewarded with his commission.

Rumours were now rife for a long rest. Consequently spirits ran high and the men were in the mood to enjoy to the full the opportunities allowed by the Colonel for relaxation. Necessary fatigues and inspections only were exacted during the two days at Luna Park. But this statement may have to be qualified in its reference to C Section, for views were sharply divided as to the subjects of hair cut and shoe lace inspections. Those from whom no particular duty was exacted filled in the period by visiting old familiar scenes and haunts in Poperinghe, Wippenhoek and Abeele. The Horse Transport set out on the 20th for Caistre to pick up the Unit which was later to proceed to Merville by bus, after having been entirely cleaned up of both dirt and cash.

Leaving Luna Park on the 21st the Unit moved by bus and foot to Merville where it was joined by the transport. Here the night was spent in fairly decent billets. That same evening there was quite an excellent concert staged, by which many weary spirits were tremendously bucked. The next morning the Unit set out for Busnes which was reached in various ways by 4 p.m. Captain Secord in defiance of all the established customs of the Unit's Officers, determined to make use of the mathematical fact that

two sides of a triangle are together greater than the third, with the result that A Section arrived at the new quarters early and triumphant, beating B and C Sections by a full hour's marching. It has been whispered from time to time that the Officers' chagrin at Captain Secord's solecism was only lessened by the fact that they had struck the best billets ever since they had tramped the roads of France. Private Chapman of C Section was spared this march by receiving orders to proceed to Blighty to take up his Chaplaincy. Immensely popular with all in the Unit, having formed many deep and intimate friendships, the 'Private Padre' of C Section left behind him the memory of a staunch and cheerful comrade, an enthusiastic promoter of "M. & D.", together with many other schemes devised to lift the mind out of the beaten rut of army methods.

During the march from Busnes the Unit was split in such a way that A and B Sections marched through Gillès and Divion to Ourton, whilst C Section proceeded to Auchel. The reason for the division was that B and A were to deal with the sick from the 11th Brigade group quartered around Ourton, and that C Section should handle the 12th Brigade group around Auchel. The enterprising B boys were not slow in converting a room in a farmhouse into a recreation room where reading, writing and the odd game of poker filled in the chilly evenings. The linguists as of old soon fraternised with the natives in whose kitchens and besides whose warm stoves they dug deep into and shared generously the welcome, if premature, Christmas parcels, incidentally telling the tale of the awful war in 'les tranchées'. Precisely the same happened at Auchel with the difference that the large public hall was used as an evacuating centre for the sick or a recreation hut, as the health of the Brigade determined. It was only a few weeks after this time that the inhabitants of this mining village experienced only too bitterly for themselves the effects of enemy bombing and shelling, so that soon this town became literally catacombed with civilian dugouts. With the exception of a few route marches, fatigues, and a spasmodic attempt at P.T., there was little happening during the month until the unusual event of a General Election took place. Then for a week one asked the other the vital question: "Are you in favour of Conscription or not?" Debates on the subject had not abated even when the oath was taken, and the ballot placed in the box. It was soon forgotten, however, and during the period of rest, both the Units' morale and its numbers were re-inforced to full strength by the time word came for line work again.

Monday, the 17th, was devoted to packing up of kits and equipment to be in readiness for a move on the morrow. C Section was detailed to take over the new front at Avion and to this end the squads were taken from Auchel right up to the dressing stations at Angres, whence the squads detailed for R.A.P. work went right ahead and were at duty in the new posts by the afternoon. Meanwhile A and B Sections and the transport were condemned to do the journey from Ourton to the M.D.S. at Jenks' Siding by road. Setting out on the morning of the 18th, enjoying the cold nip in the air, they reached Grand Servins Hospital Huts rather dampened by the rain which had fallen during the afternoon. After listening to the tales of the Ambulance men then on duty there, to the effect that there were umpteen German divisions massing on the Lens front the boys of the XIth, wearing all their clothes that they might be dry in the morning, turned into their bunks and felt that Les Quatre Vents was surely not far away. The next morning the march was resumed, and passing the familiar haunts around the Chateau de la Haie, the Unit tramped on to Jenks' Siding under the shadow of Vimy Ridge. A number of A Section men were soon despatched to Fosse 6 where coal in abundance waited to be bagged and sacked.

Despite the rumours, the work in this section promised to be a sinecure in comparison with that of a month ago. There were well constructed trenches most of the way from the R.A.P. to the Crocus Relay, and from there to La Culotte or Burke's Hole the wheeled stretcher went as easily as a baby carriage along the Strand. Perhaps it was as well for the newer re-inforcements that they should have been broken in so, for one's heart still goes out in sympathy to those who arrived in time to be initiated at Passchendaele. But the squad at Na-poo Corner must be carrying its bedsores yet, so overburdened were they with waiting for work. The spacious vaulted cellar at La Culotte made an admirable A.D.S. especially when Captain Turnbull's inventive genius had burst into activity. Jenk's Siding as a hospital was new as far as the XIth was concerned, for they had merely dug its foundations during the previous Summer. Now spacious Nissen Huts formed a compact and altogether neat-looking station. The men's small Nissen Huts were on the west side, separated from the Hospital by the cook-house, Q.M. Stores and Orderly Room. The Officers' quarters were situated on the north side on higher level than the camp. The transport lines lay to the north



west side of the slope of the hill, for Jenk's was built at the foot of the ever-to-be-remembered Lorette Ridge.

On the 22nd, Major Moshier called together a man from each Section, together with Corporal Downer, to put before them the plans for writing a consecutive narrative of the Unit's work from its inception. Hall was taken from A, Emery from B, Johnson and Best from C; the latter was asked to make sketches of camps and incidents which would form illustrations to the narrative. After certain necessary preamble the work was commenced a few days before Christmas. Materials and information at hand were very meagre, and much time was spent initially in collecting materials and getting into stride. The O.C. often enquired after the progress of the diary and gave it such support and encouragement that the diary or "history fatigue" became as permanent as "sanitary". Some time afterwards, Roe of C Section was placed on the Historical Staff and took over the work of Emery, who later left the Unit with the Medicals. After a few weeks, however, movements and engagements of the Unit relegated the work of the writers to those periods only when things were slack. Although this is not in chronological sequence, it must be stated once and for all that those precious scraps of paper were not safe from danger or loss even when in the Orderly Room, and it was a standing joke, yet a distressing fact for months, that the whole of "Vimy" had been



irretrievably lost till it was eventually dug out of a pile of forgotten papers in the O.R. However, when this history was commenced Christmas festivities gave the Unit a new trend of ideas.

Those at the M.D.S. determined that the affair should excel the former at the Four Winds. The dramatic talent in the Unit staged a sketch to follow the eats, and rehearsals showed that the fires of Curtis' enthusiasm were even intense enough to obliterate all sense of the freezing atmosphere. On Christmas Day a hundred and fifty sat down to a dinner, excellently prepared and served and crowned by Captain Turnbull's famous brew of 'punch'. An expected and appreciated speech from Major Moshier afterwards briefly stated that the funds for the dinner were again greatly due to the generosity of the Western Universities Units Women's Auxiliary, who were devoting themselves nobly in many practical ways to the XIth and the scattered fragments of the 196th Battalion. The evening witnessed a happy throng in the gaily decorated hut where the concert was staged. Quartettes, solos, both sentimental and comic, instrumental solos and duets, happy speeches from the O.C. and other Officers, together with the sketch entitled "A Rendezvous in 1950", completed a memorable day. That section of the Unit stationed at Angres with Captain Kerr profited by 'Prince Charlie's' generosity and 'Ko-Ko's' cooking to such an extent that they felt not the

slightest envy of those who feasted at Jenk's. The boys of C Section who manned the forward posts, though not forgotten on the day itself, were relieved from the line and celebrated their official Christmas dinner under more favourable conditions at the M.D.S. on the 27th, when the C Section Officers, Captains MacKinnon and Kerr, were re-assured of their popularity by the rounds of applause following their brief speeches.

The New Year's entertainment for the Unit and patients billed for the evening of the 2nd of January, 1918, and staged by all three sections, proved a gala night. Lilley's songs, Roe's hits in "I wonder if it's true," and the O.C.'s remarks blended excellently with the other items on a very full programme.



The two following weeks passed rather quietly. The line work under the new conditions became almost a pleasure, for casualties were rare. Winter snow caused a lull in the fighting in the sector. During the long intervals to themselves, the men occupied themselves to a great extent with reading, which was facilitated by the opening of a tent in the Souchez Valley by the newly formed University of Vimy Ridge—later to become of inestimable value to the Canadian soldier who attached himself to the far reaching organization of the Khaki University of Canada. During this period of ease Major Neff arrived from England to take over the command of C Section, which had become vacant by the departure of Captain MacKinnon for Bushy Park Hospital, near London. The 4th Divisional Concert Party had just returned from a tour to Blighty where they had made selections of music, scenery and apparel to enable them to stage their new play entitled, "A Lad in France." Facilities were given to the XIth to take in the new show at the Chateau de la Haie, and in spite of the fact that the roads were deep in mud and rain fell freely, the Unit to a man affirmed emphatically that the show was worth it.

## PART V.



### CHAPTER I.

#### AMELIORATIONS.

At the end of a somewhat leisurely month of line work just described, the XIth, relieved by the XIIth Field Ambulance, marched by way of Ablain St. Nazaire to their old home at Chateau de la Haie. It was good to see once more the camp with which were associated most of the pleasanter memories of the past months. The horses, too, knew their old quarters from afar, and Captain Wright's mount, anxious perhaps to secure the best stall, raced ahead carrying the Captain into the stable at the gallop.

The duty falling to the XIth was the running of the Divisional Rest Station. The A and D Room Staff, the Pack Store Keepers, Ward Orderlies, custodians of bath and incinerator and other functionaries taking their posts at the old familiar stations, cleaned and straightened up the premises and made ready to begin work. To a large number of the men, however, the place was new. Too many, alas, of those who "carried on" here the year before were no longer with their comrades: some were in hospital, at the Base or in England, some had passed into the Great Beyond, and their places were filled with newcomers.

In addition to hospital duty and the regular camp fatigues a new duty appeared. The great increase in aerial activity and bombing from airplanes which marked the latter end of 1917 promised lively times for all above ground when the better weather of the Spring of 1918 should arrive. It was essential, therefore, that all huts, especially those occupied by sick and wounded should be protected, at least from bomb-splinters, as speedily as possible. When the XIth took over the La Haie Camp they found this work already begun by their predecessors, but without much regard to proportion and general fitness of things. For example, the hospital huts were left almost unprotected, while the Officers' Mess was so built up with sandbags as to resemble a "strong point." On the arrival of the XIth this fortification was quickly removed and the bags placed along the sides of the hospital huts together with many newly-filled ones, until a fair measure of protection was afforded to the occupants of each ward. The huts were also at this time given a fresh coating of tar.

Psychologically this was a curious period of the war. The collapse of Russia as a belligerent on the side of the Allies some months before and the more recent failure of the Italians to hold the Austrian advance served to dispel entirely those dreams of an early finish to the war and a return home in the course of the next twelve months. It seemed as if the men calmly made up their minds, since they were committed indefinitely to France, to make their existence there as tolerable as possible: consequently conditions at this time threatened to become almost civilized. Several of the activities and relaxations of the XIth at the period here recorded serve to illustrate this point.

Parties of men would sally forth every evening to the Divisional Theatre or the Cinema in the Chateau grounds, to Camblain l'Abbé or Gouy Servins in quest of entertainment. Some excellent pantomimes or variety shows were put on by one concert party or another and it was noticed that the audience, so far from being satisfied by amateurish efforts, such as a year ago they had applauded to the echo, now assumed the old critical attitude of their civilian days when a show had to be worth the money.

It was during these same winter months that the educational schemes which afterwards culminated in the work of the Khaki University in the demobilization period began to attract the attention of the men in France. It was among the troops of the 3rd Division that courses of lectures and of directed reading were earliest developed in France while the Chaplain Service and the Y.M.C.A. also did great work in the same

direction. It would be a long while (longer, it then seemed, than was actually the case) before college men, teachers, agriculturists and artisans would be able to resume work as civilians, but it would be well worth while if they could keep their faculties from rusting and occupy their spare time by following, if only in a fragmentary manner, while on active service, such studies as would tend to prepare them for their callings in civil life.

In this department the XIth Field Ambulance were not behind the times. When they became settled at the Chateau Camp, a scheme that had been under consideration for some weeks, was carried into effect. From Monday to Saturday the evenings were divided each into three lecture periods and a full syllabus of studies was arranged. Lieut.-Col. Moshier lectured twice a week on Anatomy to the Medical Students, Staff Sergeant Brown lectured on Agriculture, Privates Jackson and Watterson on Psychology and Philosophy respectively, Straith on Political Economy. There were classes in Modern Languages, in Latin, in Shorthand, and in Chemistry, in Politics and Mathematics. Enthusiasm ran high and a good attendance at the lectures was maintained throughout the month spent at the Chateau. It was not in the nature of things that such a course of studies could be maintained consecutively on active service but it was hoped that the scheme, if held in abeyance during spells of line work could be resumed during periods of hospital work and in divisional rests. The big German advance in March, however, the subsequent rapid movements and general uncertainty, rendered it impossible to fulfil the hopes of the educational enthusiasts.

Other instances of fragments of civilization, dragged in, so to speak, by the tail, should receive notice here. The XIth Mock Parliament that had adjourned a few months before, re-assembled, and perhaps the most memorable debate was that on the subject of "Standard Dress for Men." One will not easily forget Tom Watterson's side-splitting speech against the motion, his most annoying monologue and the "absolutely chaotic chaoticism" pictured by him as the state of his opponents' minds! Soon after this a fancy dress ball was staged. A number of the men attended in feminine attire, some of it apparently borrowed from the ladies of Gouy Servins, some of it improvised from materials on the spot. Miss Puggie Emery with her flaxen ringlets of tow and her delicate rose-pink complexion was the belle of the evening, but buxom Miss Clarissa Maddin was a close rival. Charlie Chaplin, an Indian squaw, M. and D., Daily Orders, McMoran as a Red Cross Nurse and a score of others helped the merry medley.

Again, no longer was it necessary for a fellow to hang around the cook-house on the chance of finding one of the cooks in sufficiently good temper to give him a dipperful of hot water for shaving. No, the new civilization demanded that a "Soyer" stove be placed in the men's ablution hut and that the picquet should light the fire before reveille so that there might be a constant supply of hot water at the toilet hour.

It was during these early months of 1918 that the initial work of compiling the present History was accomplished. Surely it must be agreed that "History Fatigue" was indeed an unprecedented feature of this unprecedented time.

A divisional rest in the neighbourhood of Bruay followed the month just described and on February 19th the XIth marched to Viefort Chateau near Houdain. A Section were given quarters in a large room in the Chateau and the upper floor of the outlying building they had occupied over a year before on the return from the Somme. C Section were billeted on the top floor of the Chateau while B proceeded to Lozinghem to attend to the sick of the 12th Brigade at the 23rd C.C.S. (Imperial). This station was not running at its full capacity, so about a dozen of the tents were allocated to the XIth in which to open their establishment.

As the 12th Brigade was not overburdened with inspections and brass-shining competitions the troops refrained from "swinging it" into hospital, fearing lest they would be compelled to forego their evening fun, for estaminets and egg-and-chip joints were numerous in the locality. A favourite rendezvous was the patisserie in Auchel where a cute little mademoiselle presided, while at Lillers a good movie show could occasionally be enjoyed.

The B boys could hardly agree with the views of the ruling powers in the C.C.S. on the ration question. On a dark night two of the lads made a raid on the hard-tack box in the mess-hall. They reached their objective at the cost of a few scratches and in the excitement of the moment their animal instincts guided them towards a tin containing a tempting yellow substance, obviously oleomargarine. The biscuits were quickly plunged into the greasy substance and a hasty exit was made. The marauders reached their quarters in safety and placed the biscuits on a hot plate on the stove to toast them, thereby causing the mysterious covering to be absorbed. In a few

minutes the biscuits had assumed a tempting shade and while conveying the spoils mouthwards the boys offered a silent thanks. Then bit! "Say, this stuff tastes rank! How is yours?" "Rotten!" "Wow!" It was discovered all too late for the offended palates that the troops were engaged in eating hardtack anointed with soft soap!!! So that in this case, at least, the proverb about "stolen fruits" needed revision.

The division of the Unit rendered impracticable the continuance of the curriculum of studies previously followed at the Chateau de la Haie. A few lectures however, were continued for a while, notably those in Shorthand and Philosophy. An indelible picture in the memory of the latter class is that of a company of khaki-clad students, notebook and pencil in hand, hanging on the words of "Professor" Watterson, who, discoursing on the life and work of Socrates, stood in their midst, his sooty kitchen overalls, in lieu of a gown, his infamous old winter service-cap with ear flaps doing duty as a mortar-board.

It soon became evident that the stay at Vielfort was not to be a time either of unalloyed pleasure or of undisturbed peace. Reviews, with all their attendant ills (to give at least the private soldier's view of the matter) were the order of the day. Three times did the Ambulance men march out in battle order to Houdain to be inspected with the 11th Brigade. The first performance was no more than a practice for the more important occasions to follow, but on the 27th February General Sir Arthur Currie inspected the Brigade. A cold wind was blowing on that day and the boys were thoroughly chilled by the time the G.O.C. reached the Ambulance which was stationed at the

## R.A.P. CROCUS TRENCH, LEIVIN.

extreme left of the parade. It was a welcome command that set things in motion for the March Past, and finally the return to camp.

Preparations were made that evening for the inspection by the Commander-in-Chief, General Sir Douglas Haig, which was to take place the next day. The men were confined to camp and enjoined to make the most of their time scrubbing and blanching their wet equipment and shining all their brass-work. The transport was most carefully overhauled—no effort was spared in the attempt to make it almost resplendent. The next morning, the 28th, everybody and everything on parade was as smart and clean as a new pin. Contrary to a commonly received opinion, men do not like inspections. Functions of this kind are notoriously provocative of much sulphurous language while the feeling of relief when all is over can hardly be exaggerated. It is not pleasant to be forced to stand in a field for a whole morning regardless of the weather, in order that some privileged person may make personal and perhaps unflattering remarks upon one's appearance. At the same time there may happen a moment on such occasions, as actually happened on this, when a more worthy feeling than resentment moves one. There was not a man of the Xith but felt it one of the proud moments of his life when Sir Douglas rode up to the Unit, learned from the Colonel that this was the Xith Field Ambulance, and gracefully replied "They're beautifully dressed." His more formal report was entirely satisfactory and he was even more gratified by the turnout of the Horse Transport. The Colonel rode back to Vielfort, 'tis said, at a rollicking gallop, and indeed every man felt in his heart exceptionally proud of the Unit to which he belonged.

The writers of this record made great progress about this time. Obtaining the requisite authority, they rented for a nominal sum a small room in a private house in Divion where they could obtain the necessary quiet for their work. There they found a real home, and their dinner rations, carried thither daily in the inevitable sandbag, were liberally supplemented by Madame with vegetables and sweets, coffee and civilian bread. It was a grand time while it lasted; an experience far, far removed from the popular conception of war.

Except for the A Section banquet little else of note happened during the stay at Vielfort. Bruay, Houdain, and still more distant resorts, were frequently visited and all the shows, cafes and estaminets were, in their turn, well patronized. A few men were lucky enough to get away from here for their second leave to "Blighty" or Paris. Lucky indeed! For all leave was closed down before the end of March and was not opened again until late in the Fall.

The A Section banquet was a feast of goodfellowship as well as of other good things. Dinner was served in one of the larger rooms of the chateau. The panelled walls were tastefully decorated with evergreens and bunting and a blazing fire of logs filled the great open hearth, forming a picture that recalled numerous stories of old world merriment and cheer. Major McKillop, O.C. of the Section, presided, while a welcome visitor was Lieut.-Col. Bell, O.C. of the XIIth Field Ambulance. The dinner was followed by speeches, songs and college yells, and the gathering broke up amid demonstrations of great enthusiasm and goodfellowship.

On Monday, 11th, this spell of rest was broken by the call to line work. Squads were re-formed in C Section, who, to do the first spell in the line, were sent forward in ambulance cars as far as the White Chateau in Lievin. By 3 p.m. the forward posts and relays were all taken over. The following day the remainder of the Unit proceeded to Souchez for another turn at line work. Once more Jenk's Siding constituted their headquarters and M.D.S., the bearers manning a series of posts to the left of the Sector occupied by them in December and January.

## CHAPTER II.

### ALARMS AND EXCURSIONS

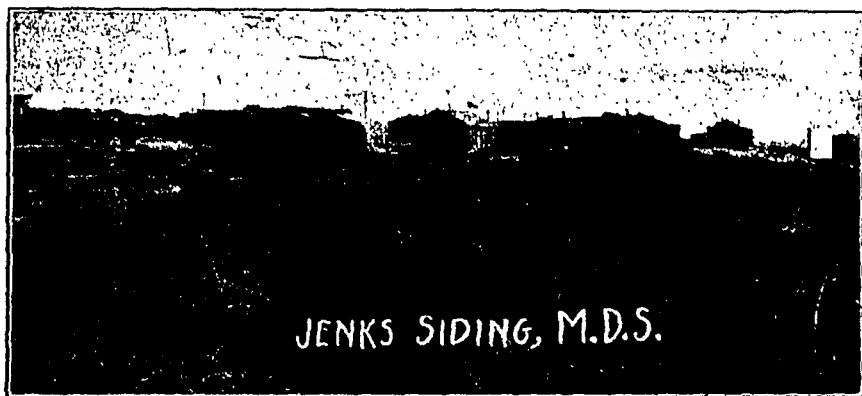
There was a tenseness in the atmosphere about this time. The year 1918 was now well on its course. The winter's activity must soon give place to action; action on a large scale and a terrible. The past year had been characterized by Allied victories on the Western Front, but victories of a costly order, victories, too, whose fruits seemed to have vanished away at the moment of plucking. Further, this tale of abortive triumphs was brought to a melancholy close by that galling reverse to the Allied arms at Bourlon Wood. What would the New Year bring? Rumors were rife concerning massed millions of men in grey, brought from the Russian Front to be hurled somewhere against the Allied line in the West. Where would the blow fall? Would the Canadians, defending the unravaged Western end of the coalfield area, bear the brunt? Would the German initiative, gained at the tail end of the last year's fighting, be held and pushed, or would the Allied Command be relatively strong enough to open the ball in 1918 with another Vimy? Whatever the views of our High Command may have been, popular judgment, at any rate, foretold a defensive game on our side, and the advent of a period—perhaps a very long period—whose experiences would test to the uttermost the patience, the physical endurance, the nervous energy of the Allies.

This sense of expectancy in the breasts of the XIth boys was heightened on their arrival at Jenk's Siding on that 12th March by the observance of a change that had come over the Souchez Valley where it turns the northern end of Vimy Ridge. Ever since the Germans had been driven from those heights nearly a year ago, the valley had been quiet and peaceful, a marshy deserted tract lying between the last of the rest camps and the first of those wrecked mining villages, the suburbs of Lens. In January the boys had foraged for firewood through this forlorn tract and had found it no more than a deserted battlefield, yielding up now and again a rusted bayonet, a shattered rifle, or mouldered fragments of mortality. Now, however, in March, all is activity in this area. There is a bustle of life along the base of the Ridge—a pale yellow flash leaps forth, a roar reverberates from hill to hill. Another flash and yet another, and a double crash re-echoes across the valley. "What excavations are those across the road? No, more to the left. There! Old gunpits? Not on your life! See the new camouflage! Those are new emplacements for our guns when Heinie comes over on us. Empty

are they? Well, Heinie won't know that when he spots them from overhead. He'll drop a bomb or two to make sure, and as like as not he'll get us! This is going to be a warm spot, allright!"

As has been explained in a previous chapter, the hospital camp at Jenks' Siding had been planned to serve as a M.D.S. after the proposed attack on Sallaumines the preceding October. Had that attack been carried out, and successfully, this hospital would have been reasonably secure from ordinary shell-fire. As it stood in March, 1918, it was the farthest advanced establishment of its kind: all Nissen huts—no dugouts or cellars whatsoever, and a situation only less exposed than if it had stood on the top of the Ridge opposite.

No more History Fatigue—no more flute practice—the flute band, sadly depleted by the losses at Passchendaele, had blown its last expiring note at Vielfort. Stretcher squads, M.O.'s and orderlies manned the Aid Posts as of yore. C Section took the first spell of line work, B manned the hospital, A the working parties. The men of the last named section for a day or two revetted the huts and then proceeded to more congenial duties at Lievin, where one party cleared and fixed up cellars to increase the capacity of the A.D.S. at the White Chateau, while the other party foraged amid the neighbouring wreckage for stone, bricks and lumber, the spoils being despatched to Jenk's Siding for building and road-repairing purposes. This particular White Chateau, like so many other houses that were similarly designated, had not been a chateau at all,



but bore all the signs of having been devoted to some religious use. What most struck the fancy of the new-comer was the life-size statue of the sainted heroine of France, Jeanne D'Arc, standing at the entrance to the A.D.S. in a blue dress in which some romantic soldier had clad her, wearing at her waist a bunch of keys, and, as was necessary in that locality, a steel helmet upon her head at the same time suspended from her hand was a shell-case which served as a gas alarm.

From the 12th to 21st of March the whole front in this Sector was particularly quiet. Artillery activity was light and spasmodic and only at times when battalions were changing was any trouble stirred up. Casualties were very rare. Men sat outside the dugouts in the trenches and lazily regarded the occasional air fights in the warm blue sky above. The Bosche endeavoured to create havoc occasionally by sending over bursts of gas shells, but the effectiveness of the Box respirator and gas curtains were too well appreciated for the shells to do any mischief. As a measure of retaliation, but mainly to test out a new gas, the Canadians planned an extensive gas attack for 10.55 p.m. on the 18th, but owing to unpropitious circumstances this was postponed until 11 p.m. on the 21st. The discharge of gas was accomplished by sending over salvos of gas shells fired simultaneously on to the German lines. All available stretcher bearers had been sent up the line in case of need, but there was no failure. Twice that night the ground was shaken as by an earthquake, and subsequent rumor had it that German ambulances were busy clearing casualties for twenty-four hours afterwards, while the Canadians suffered but one casualty. Whether this be an exaggeration or no, the tale indicates truly that this revenge for the Ypres gas attack was entirely successful.

It was about this time that life for those at Jenks' Siding began to be uncomfortable. A German high-velocity gun began to pay its attentions to the vicinity. Usually a few shells would land between the camp and Souchez Corner about mid-day and a few more shortly after "Lights out". This went on for nearly a week, nobody worrying very much until the shells began to fall much nearer the camp than at first they had done. It was realized that if one should explode in one of the huts at night, the greater part of the personnel of the camp might be put out of action. Work was thereupon begun upon the construction of a dugout beneath the huts. On Saturday night, March 23rd, the IXth Field Ambulance were forced by shellfire to abandon their Camp nearby. The following day rumors of the German offensive began to come to hand, but as there seemed little authoritative backing to the alarming news, everyone hoped for the best. That night at ten o'clock, all other thoughts were driven away by the explosion of shells in the camp. The men who had turned in, most of them that day having been relieved from the line, lay in their blankets and felt the cold chills run down their spines when the boom, whine and crash of the shells disturbed the silence of the night. As the chunks of shell and earth fell on the roofs of the huts, all heads were involuntarily buried under the blankets until with one accord, everyone hastily scrambled into clothing, stuffed most of the equipment within reach into packs, groundsheets or blankets, fell in outside the huts and the whole party moved down the road or along the valley towards huts near Carency. It was most unfortunate that only a few witnessed a most dramatic stunt executed by Sergeant Henderson on the floor of his bunk house when endeavouring to seek protection under the chicken wire. Quarters were found near Hospital Corner, where the once deserted shell-swept fields now presented the appearance of a vast camp. This experience of retreat was laughable after it was over, but all laughter died when in a day or two there arrived news of the great tide of German advance South of Arras and the disquieting stories of the shelling of Paris.

On Tuesday, 26th, the Bosche began to shell the Souchez and Carency areas so vigorously that many men were killed in the neighbouring camps. These were anxious times, for everyone was standing to. News that the British line was being badly broken in the South was only too evident by the heavy firing which could be both heard and seen to the South. By Friday, the 29th, the rumor painted things in the blackest of colors. Naval reverses and sinking of transports coincided with reverses on land, although some hopes were raised by the reports that the French had pierced into the salient made by the Hun advance.

Confidence was not restored by the continually changing and conflicting rumors as to the work immediately in store for the Canadians. Movement orders came to hand, but were quickly superseded by others which were in their turn cancelled again by others. All extra baggage belonging to the Officers or to the Unit, such as the recently purchased piano, and a supply of study books, had to be stored, for the whole Corps was to hold itself in readiness for rapid movement at short notice. The first movement of the XIth was made to the Chateau de la Haie, where lectures were given by Section Commanders on marching discipline and care of the feet.

From the Chateau Camp movements of troops could be observed in all directions. It was said that the 3rd Canadian Division had made a brilliant stand against a massed Hun attack. Orders came to the Unit to be ready to move off in an hour. Men lay around the camp with everything packed and nerves keyed up for grim times ahead. Orders came too that a few men were to be sent to Fresnicourt to manage the Corps Rest Station there. Accordingly Staff Sergeant Brown and six men went with Major McKillop to run the place. The next day at noon the Unit took to the road and headed north east to Fresnicourt and took over the Corps Rest Station for twenty four hours pending the next order.

### CHAPTER III.

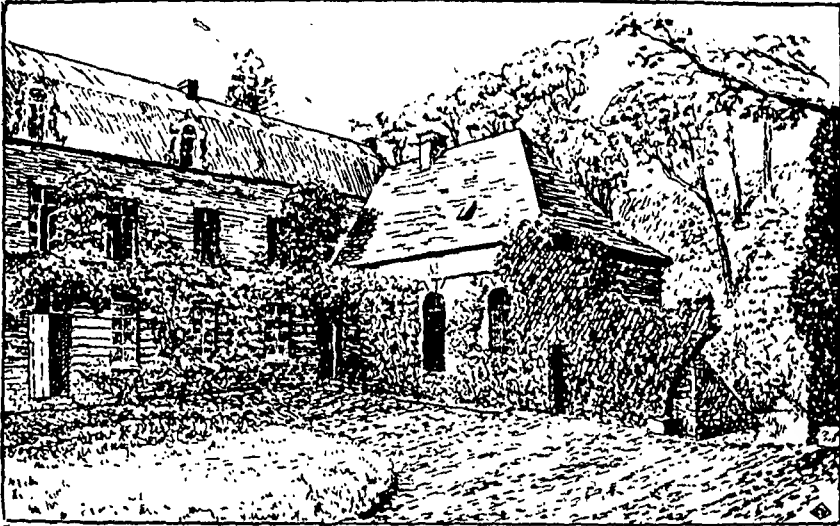
#### FRESNICOURT

That twenty-four hours' occupation of Fresnicourt extended itself to two months. For some days, however, the Unit was confined to barracks to be in readiness to move at short notice. No such order came; the XIth settled down to a steady occupation of the hospital and began to regard their position as identical with that of other Field Ambulances who had taken their two, three or four months' turn at running the Corps Rest Station.



To a soldier marching westward from the devastated Souchez Valley, over the monotonously bare plateau that stretches southward from Lorette Ridge, through those muddy, dilapidated and unspeakably dreary villages, the Servins, the little hamlet of Fresnicourt breaks into view beneath the hill like a glimpse of Paradise. So excellently has this beauty spot under the hill been portrayed in an issue of "M. and D." that one could do no better than to quote it in toto:-

"These evenings in May spent on the hill, at the foot of which nestles this charming village, will not soon be forgotten. While only a few miles away hundreds of thousands of the enemy are thirsting to destroy the freedom and peace of the villagers, there they are, working away in their neat cottage gardens, women, children, and old men. Ignoring the menacing rumble of enemy artillery, they continue to pursue their daily rounds. The milkmaid is leading her cows back to the pasture of those lush green meadows. There is the little triangular cemetery with many a newly-dug grave bearing its inscription, "A notre fils," and there the church of seventh-century origin from the belfry of which the Angelus is daily sounded. A tinkling bell calls the youth of the village to their training for life's battle, and the picturesque and genial schoolmaster, who also acts as secretary to the Mayor, dignifies the 'Mairie' with his portly presence, a well-known figure here for 30 years.



CHATEAU H.Q. FRESNICOURT

"And as the 'golden sun sinks in the west,' the moon nearly at the full, high in the heavens, there float up to us the familiar sounds of all which goes to make up that touch of evening peacefulness peculiar to country life. We hear the 'lowing of the herd,' the occasional bark of the farmhouse dog, the merry laughter of children, and the voice of the farm labourer as he directs his horses homewards.

"Can any words portray the beauty of those woods which crown the hill? Their wealth of wild flowers of infinite variety, winding paths, beautiful specimens of deciduous trees of almost every kind with, here and there, clumps of the evergreen pine and fir with which we Canadians are so lovingly familiar—all combine to produce a restfulness which is the forest's own. And, as we stroll along on a mossy carpet among ferns and ivy, we are ministered to by feathered friends who sing their spring songs, their love songs, and their songs of hope. Listen! there is the cuckoo, who helps to swell this inimitable music, the sylvan symphony.

"The recollection of Easter morning will long remain. Resurrection was the keynote. Hope pervaded all things. Nature's stored-up vitality in all its forms was bursting forth. Fresh verdure, newly-born lambs, and spring sunshine all proclaimed the advent of abundant life. Little children graced the hillside meadows with their charm and gathered posies of the 'flowers of the field'.

"At the lower end of the winding village street one approaches, through the avenue of stately chestnut trees, the 'house of the seigneur'. Rectangular, and enclosing a cobbled courtyard, it bears on its wall, ivy and climbing flowers of much beauty.

"The old-time interior, with its curious cupboards, winding staircases and antique furniture, including the ancient spinet—the fore-runner of the modern piano—gives an impression of restfulness.

"Such as above described has been this domain for long, long years. It has its traditions and its present-day vivid contrasts."

This then was the Corps Rest Station, a hospital for the sick soldier whose case was not serious nor protracted enough to secure a trip to the Base or to Blighty. The Officers' quarters, the Orderly Room and various clinics were located in the main building. The wards for officers and sergeants were established in huts in the Chateau garden, while the men's wards stood in the outer grounds to the left, along the road to Olhain, and formed a camp of considerable size. The personnel of the XIth was augmented by the men of the C.A.M.C. Pool which was stationed here, and from which drafts were made every few days to the various ambulance and hospital units of the Corps. A pleasant but strenuous time was spent in this place. Ward duties, Dressing Room, A. and D. Room, Dispensary, Pack-store, Bath-house and cooking operations were all on a far larger scale than the Unit had handled hitherto, for the patients would number from 500 to 700 at one time. The daily muster of men discharged for duty resembled a Unit on parade, with this difference; that every variety of badge and patch worn in the Canadian Corps was observable. The coming of the XIth with its energetic O.C., resulted in some changes at the C.R.S. Tribute here must be paid to the untiring energies of N. R. McDonald and Hyslop of the A. and D. Room staff, who together with the pack-store keepers were responsible for elucidating the tangled and unintelligible records, so that it was possible to tell who and who were not legally in hospital. It was discovered that there were certain "old soldiers" who for weeks or months, even, after their recovery had made Fresnicourt their home. Ingratiating themselves in the kitchens and bath-houses where they had secured unauthorized appointments, there they "hung out", serene, happy and comfortable until investigations resulted in their being turned out into an unhospitable war.

During the lengthy sojourn here, off-duty hours were passed away either in delightful rambles to the hill-top, to Caucourt, to the historic tower at Olhain, to 'Les Rouges et Noir' at "Le Bra-sat" theatre, or in organized games. In football and baseball between A and C Sections, the latter won out both times. A concert, staged by the XIth in the Y.M.Hut and received by a somewhat hypercritical audience, eventualized into a mud-slinging affair which seemed to satisfy the audience more than the spoken word.

The last day of April was marked by an inspection at eleven in the morning by the A.D.M.S. and General Currie, whose aim seemed mainly to play hide and seek among the waterbottles till he had satisfied himself that the XIth could not be caught napping. But according to "M. and D.", though the General Officer failed in this respect, a rather more particular officer almost succeeded in catching a few who napped in Piccadilly's.

"Piccadilly: who's that? Why, a fair, buxom lady of a score and ten years, perhaps. From her round rosy face to her rather hefty feet there seemed to radiate goodwill and generosity towards the 'troupes,' but she had one little weakness, she would persist in selling 'vin blink,' 'Biere,' and sundry other atrocities to the soldiers, in spite of the fact that her front window was camouflaged by a great 'out of bounds' notice.

"Never would I be so unjust to the good woman as to say that she did it for any other than unselfish reasons; although I have heard of her accepting money from those who would insist.

"Her little Estaminet was situated on the main street, a low, typically French village dwelling, whitewashed of course, and apparently staggering under the heavy red-tile roof, which it supported. It was entered, in front, by a single door in two pieces, capable of being locked top and bottom. Those of our 'soldats' who found themselves confronted with a consuming thirst for the forbidden fruit—as it were—were forced to enter by the rear through a low, swinging gate in the hedge and to follow up the garden walk to the rear door, which was strongly guarded, like the palaces of old; except that the couchant lions were replaced by piles of 'dead soldiers'. Man is quick to follow the example of others on mischief bent; and in a remarkably short space of time the clientele of our husky Madame had made a well-worn trail to the rear of the little cabin.

"All went merry as a marriage bell until, a certain evening, the cloud burst with startling suddenness; and the strong right arm of the law decided that it was time to intervene in the interests of law and order. Under cover of the friendly darkness, two

'limbs' of the law advanced swiftly to the attack, canes in hand, their hearts steeled with fortitude and determination.

"Within the inner sanctuary were gathered a merry crowd—'buckshee' privates galore; many lance-jacks, of both upstairs and downstairs variety; and full-fledged corporals and sergeants, their dignity laid aside for the time being.

"Glasses clinked, arguments abounded, and corks flew with the rapidity of an Artillery barrage. 'Encore biere,' 'Vin Blink,' came thick and fast; and as quickly the good woman, with beaming face and rapidly filling pockets, filled their orders. A happy scene! and it makes my heart bleed when I think of it all—so happy, so care-free—and all the time that terrible sword of Damocles suspended over their unsuspecting heads.

"Hush! The noise stopped as if by magic. The silence became oppressive. 'Beat it!' came a low voice, for all the world like the warning hiss of a snake in the grass before it strikes. The crowd, as if moved by a single impulse, rose as a man, leaving 'Vin Blinks' and 'Bieres' suspended in a smoke-befogged atmosphere as they made their mad stampede towards the front door.

"Curses! Would those d——bolts never come back? Five seconds—ten seconds—ten seconds—precious time lost. Now the top half is open at last. A half-dozen leapt out, frog fashion, landing on their heads, or shoulders, or on all fours; were all up in a thrice and away, the vanguard led by Private B——, who literally skimmed the earth, borne on the wings of fear.



C.R.S.

May, 1918.

"Like a startled stag he passed all the others in the record breaking sprint; took the hedge at a leap; and, never slackening the speed one whit, darted into his hut, and jumped into bed in full attire, pulling the blankets over his head. Poor B——, like the ostrich which hides its head in the sand, thought that, because he could not see, he could not be seen.

"By this time a goodly crowd had gathered to see the fun and to chaff the victims. Private M——n, of 'C' Section, was in hysterics; 'the best bl——y race I've ever seen,' he said, with much gusto; and immediately he relapsed into another paroxysm of laughter. 'Any casualties?' asked one of the anxious crowd. 'Aye, two fish, one buck, and a lance-jack; serves him right, the Prussian,' and after a further laughing fit, he recovered sufficiently to ask the crowd, 'And did you see 'the lad?' he went away with a list to starboard, and one hand over his ear. Ha, ha, ha."

It has been said that a pleasant time was spent here. Hard work in such beautiful natural surroundings was less irksome than usual. When the day's work was done it was delightful to lie on the grassy bank and feast the eyes on the fresh green of the spring landscape; a delightful change from shellhole, wire and mud. At the same time there was a constant feeling of anxiety in the breast of everyone at the disquieting news of continual German gains; first at Merville, then at Messines and Kemmel, then further to the south against the French. By degrees, however, this uneasiness was replaced by a growing confidence. A conviction that something was a-preparing that would eventually turn the tide if the Allies could but hold out long enough. The steady cheerful optimism of tired English Tommies, passing through from the hell in the south to the hell in Flanders, was reassuring. The stories of the abortive attacks made upon the Canadian

front by the enemy in the early days of his success, did much to hearten those who, at this critical time, were condemned to the comparative inaction of hospital work. Then there were stories—rumors at first—slowly confirmed, that a big Allied reserve army of storm troops was being trained and held in readiness for a grand coup in the summer, and that the Canadians were to form part of it. Canadian infantry were observed at manoeuvres in the fields, practising open warfare tactics and their movements indicated advance, not retreat.

On May 20th, Private Singleton, of C Section, received orders to return to England for his Chaplaincy. "Singy," the imperturbable and philosophical personification of "laissez-faire" was revered by the boys for his coolness and courage in many tight corners. Patterson of A Section left from here in order to train for his commission in the C.M.G.C.

Then at last, at the end of May, came definite orders to the Unit for this same intensive training, when it was moved into the Pernes area with the rest of the 4th Division, and the training began.

## CHAPTER IV.

### INTENSIVE TRAINING.

Once again the Eleventh found themselves in idyllic surroundings. Their location was a farm in the hamlet of Gricourt, close to the village of Bours. The men had their quarters in the lofts over the farm buildings, but many preferred to bivouac in the home pasture. In this peaceful rusticity, however, the men were not suffered to forget the existence of the war. The main line of railway from St. Omer to St. Pol and the south ran close by, and its importance for the movement of supplies and troops tempted the German artillery to try conclusions with it. Accordingly the echoes of that peaceful valley were awakened daily by the explosion of tremendous shells (of about 17" diameter) hurled from beyond the far-away battle-line, to the terror of the inhabitants of Marest and the outskirts of Pernes, where in one instance a cottage was completely demolished by the explosion of a single shell in the front garden. One night the gunners fired six shots into the village of Marest, scaring the inhabitants nearly to death, but doing little damage; and then, to the relief of every one in the neighbourhood, ceased their attempts altogether. German airplanes were very active in this region for the first few nights the XIth were at Bours, but one night the British planes and searchlights co-operated so effectively that the Germans lost several machines and from that time on nocturnal marauders were less bold. One of these destroyed planes came down in flames near Pernes affording a magnificent spectacle to the boys of the XIth, as it sailed blazing over their heads.

Parade hours were mainly occupied with route marches (led by the newly formed bugle band), physical drill and all forms of sport, including the hoeing of turnips. Life was like that of a summer pleasure camp and the work was undertaken with as much good spirit as if it had been entirely voluntary. The three Sections and the united Transport Sections entered into a four-cornered contest in track athletics, football and baseball. The sports were held at Pernes, the complete accounts of which reads thus in M. and D.:-

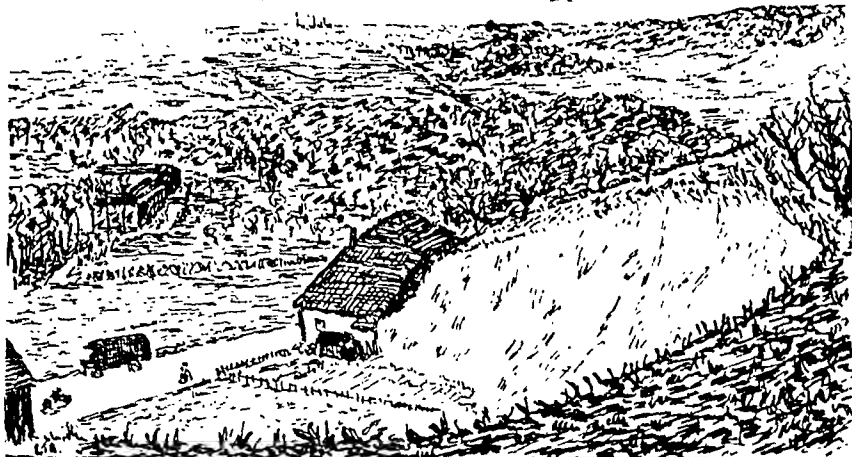
"Almost a year ago—June 5th to be exact—we held our first Field Day in France. It proved to be one of the most enjoyable and exciting of days. This year gave promise of a day equally exciting. The weather was all that could be desired when we began to train, and this year again we met to decide the sectional and individual championships under the most favourable conditions—a gentle breeze, glorious sunshine, and the bluest of skies.

"Several eliminating games were played off in the days previous to the big day. On these occasions we marched to the Y.M.C.A. grounds near a neighbouring town, and played there on the excellent sports fields, for the loan of which we were much indebted to the courtesy and kindness of the Y., from whom also we borrowed running shoes and athletic suits. We were divided into four Sections, the A.S.C., with the help of the M.T.s, making the fourth. While they did not have the same opportunity to practise for the various events, nevertheless the C.A.M.C. admired the sportsmanship which led them to compete as a section, and admit that they found them tough nuts to crack.

"In outdoor baseball the A.S.C. beat 'C' after a close and exciting game. 'A' succumbed to 'B' rather easily, in spite of Sammy Whiston's energetic rooting, which proved to be one of the spectacular feats of the whole series. A staunch supporter of 'A', he nevertheless took sides in the other games, and, stripped to the shirt sleeves—

even these being cut short—he shouted and bawled himself hoarse, using a long tin horn to emphasize his scathing sarcasm, or his exuberant applause. Indoor baseball, played on the rather rough ground of the 'home pitch' at the farm where we had our H.Q., resulted in 'B' beating 'C', and 'A' beating the A.S.C. in two good fast games. Football brought a win for 'B' over 'C' in a close game—score 1—0, Dooley distinguishing himself by his energetic playing in no particular position, but effectually shadowing 'C's' crack centre forward. 'A' won from A.S.C., who were somewhat handicapped from want of practice and knowledge of the game. The tug-of-war proved to be war of 'attrition' between 'B' and 'C' 'B' winning, after a prolonged and severe struggle, from the much superior weight of 'C'. 'B', with grim determination and great spirit, held on like Trojans, and wore out 'C'. McLaren, the hero of a hundred tussles, declared it to be the toughest pull he was over in. The competitors simply collapsed at the finish. A.S.C. lost, after a good pull, to 'A'.

"Owing to the long programme of the final day, several events were pulled off on the afternoon of Wednesday on the 'home ground'. 'C' up till this time had lost every game they had played. They declared they must have a 'hoodoo' in their bunch, and more than suspected Brower, and even accused him, and proposed to dip him in the pond. 'Aw, you go to hell now,' he drawled in protest, and waggled his ponderous feet in defiance. However, hoodoo or not, 'C' fortunes began to mend from the beginning of the finals on Wednesday afternoon. The eliminating pick-a-back wrestling left 'C'

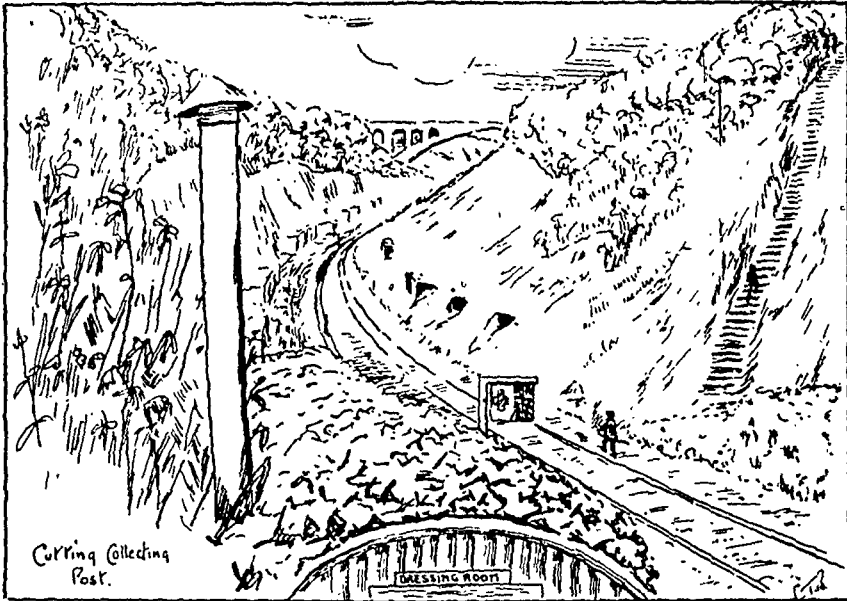


2nd April. 1914. From CAVALRY LEAD

and A.S.C. in the final. Deploying for battle, they jockeyed a few moments for positions, then clashed together in deadliest combat! After the first rush two 'C' riders remained in the saddle to one of the A.S.C., the latter being easily overcome, leaving 'C' the victors, and the winners of 6 points. At kicking the football Corben ('A') won with a magnificent kick of 150 ft 3 in., Maddin ('C') coming in a good second, and Watson (A.S.C.) third. Putting the shot was easy for McLaren ('C') who had only to throw once to win, and for an exhibition throw he eclipsed his own throw by several inches, throwing 38 ft. 2 in., Straith ('C') and King ('B') third. Baseball throwing was easily won for 'C' by E. F. Johnson, with a magnificent throw of 277 ft. Lavallee ('C') added to the points with second, and Lindsay ('B') made third place.

"So the great day arrived. Starting off at 8 a.m., we marched to the Y.M. grounds to decide the finals. A glorious sunshiny day, an occasional airman sailing in the blue overhead, while our bronzed and hardy 'veterans' braced themselves to do their damndest for the honours of their sections. The healthy rivalry and eager expectations made us forget the war. Fritz might be advancing on Paris, but he wasn't going to spoil our games. War was relegated to the background; the Sports were the serious side of things, to us the things that really mattered. 'C', whose fortunes had fallen so low in the eliminating games, and had almost counted as being out of running for the championship, but had pulled up in the events of yesterday, started the day 15 points ahead of any of the others. Would they keep it up? We would see. Tibby's redoubtable squad

who had carried off the honours of tent pitching last year, was looked to, to start the ball rolling for 'C', but judgment went against them. 'A' won on points. 'C' looked around threateningly for its 'hoodoo.' It was necessary to get every available point to win; would it not be better to kill him at once? The next event, 100 yards dash, took their thoughts from him for the time being, for E. F. Johnson ('C') and Bert Harold ('C') romped in, easy winners, with Cowie ('B') a good third. Johnson's time, according to our numerous timekeepers, was recorded variously from  $10\frac{1}{2}$  to 11 seconds. One suspected those watches of sectional feeling, but any way it was a great race. The hop-step-and-jump followed, won easily by Pearson ('A') with 37 ft., Lindsay ('B') second, Perrin ('A') third. The ground was against the best display of jumping, and we are not inclined to believe the suggestion that the winning jump was the effect upon the winner of a high velocity shell exploding in the vicinity. The mile relay race was a pretty race; McFarlane ('C') setting the pace in the first relay, led easily, and the ground gained was easily maintained by Fraser, Higgs, and E. F. Johnson, who finished at a walk. The standing broad jump Jordet captured for 'A', with 8 ft.  $9\frac{1}{2}$  in., Rankin and Smith ('B') second and third. 'A' won easily from 'B' in indoor baseball, with a score of

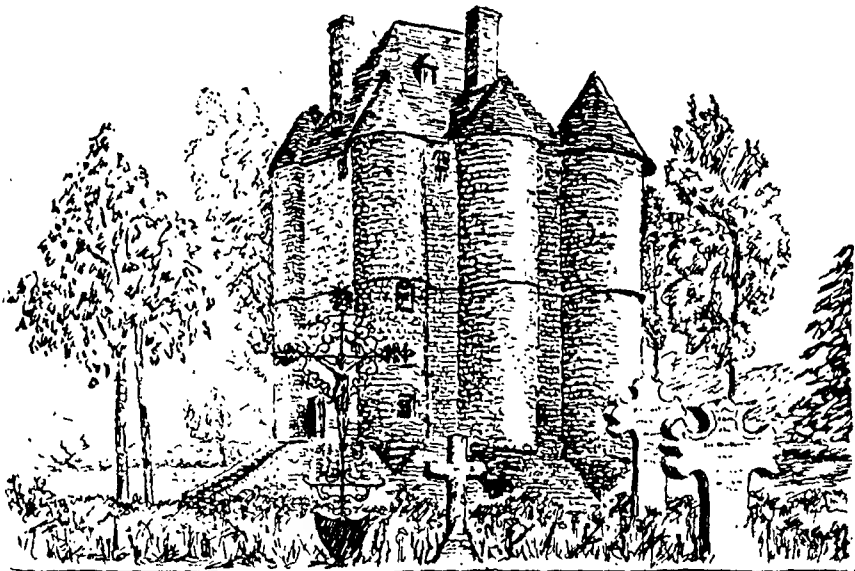


17-7. The swimming proved an interesting event, but disqualifications of 'A' and 'B' gave the decision to A.S.C. The next event was one in which the sections dropped their rivalry, namely dinner; and this was supplemented by the best 'sauce' that could possibly be served—the Canadian mail that we had been awaiting for weeks.

"Taking the field again, the shuttle race was closely contested, 'C' winning. Running broad jump was again a demonstration of Pearson's ability, and he won easily, jumping 16 ft.  $7\frac{1}{2}$  in.; Mitten (A.S.C.) and Best ('C') won second and third. The final for outdoor baseball between 'B' and A.S.C. proved the game of the day—hot, close, and exciting. Sammy appeared on the field in the guise of a French madame—fair, fat and forty, and, with purpling features, rooted vociferously, in a husky voice for the A.S.C. Who will ever forget his: 'Well! well! well! the big chief,' as the worthy Captain of 'B's' team took up his position at the bat, or Saunders' inimitable imitation of Charlie Chaplin, in a battered bowler and neat, if sooty, moustache, accompanied by his cane, walking along an invisible tight rope? Those two worthies supplied the needed touch of humour to a successful gathering; while the gracious presence of three nursing sisters, in their dainty uniforms of blue and white, gave the added charm and grace to complete the scene. The many covert glances directed towards them by our bronzed boys in khaki betrayed their interest and revealed their starved hearts for

the sight of an Englishwoman, and doubtless many sighed and thought of other happier days, when companionship with such fair creatures was an everyday pleasure. Now they appeared angels from another and a better world, where the wicked cease from troubling and war is an antiquated diversion. The race for places (at their side) was easily won by an Officer from 'B' Section and our worthy Captain, Q.M., who scored all the points.

"The game in such a fair setting, progressed merrily. Geordie Young's fast and fancy twirling of the ball being equalled by MacNamara's hard and furious pitching; and the game ended in favour of 'B' by the narrow majority of one run. A great game, boys. Hats off to the A.S.C. for their hard and plucky fight. The three-legged race produced another hero in the person of Kid Jarvis, who hobbled home with Best's help, a close winner. No one was more surprised than Mr. Jarvis himself, who now contemplates writing a book on the experience, entitled, 'My First Flight.' Higgins developed a surprising agility in the potato race, gathering the potatoes—I mean, the stones—into the hat in record time. The high jump was a process of elimination. Pearson, who was expected to win, somehow failed to clear in three tries—some said it was owing to Fritz having ceased firing his high velocity shells—leaving A. E. Johnson and Wells



to jump for first place. No one could understand the hurried and whispered conversations between these two athletes, both of whom cleared 5 ft. alike birds; but the result was in favour of Johnson in a jump of 5 ft.  $\frac{1}{2}$  in.

The scorers, official and unofficial, were now in a state of excitement, as the next few events would mean the deciding of the championships. The next race would bring the result closer. It was the 220 yards. Bang! went the pistol, and they were off. Johnson secured the inside—the course was round—and drew away, Bert at his heels. Lindsay, with a powerful and long stride, was making good headway, but MacFarlane, with an equally long stride and better staying power, drew up with him, and finally the three 'C' Section stalwarts romped in, amid the deafening cheers of the 'C' boys. The broad, ecstatic grin and rather floundering movements of applause from Joe helped some. 'C' Section had clinched the championship and individual championship as well. The three winners of the 220 were escorted back to their tent by their applauding compatriots, and Brewer, in a characteristic attitude, poked his head under the edge and cheerfully drawled out, 'Who the hell said I was a hoodoo?' Best was ready with his pencil, and sketched him in the act. Football followed—a good game between 'A' and 'B', in favour of 'A', which placed 'A' second, and as the tug-of-war would not materially have altered the score it was called off on account of the late-

ness of the hour. And so as good a day's sport as the Unit has ever witnessed was brought to a close, and the results were highly satisfactory to all concerned.

#### SECTION CHAMPIONSHIP

- 1st: 'C', 58 points, 100 francs.
- 2nd: 'A', 41 points.
- 3rd: 'B', 20 points.

#### INDIVIDUAL CHAMPIONSHIP.

- 1st: E. F. Johnson, ('C'), 12½ points, 50 francs.
- 2nd: R. C. Pearson ('A'), 7 points, 30 francs.
- 3rd: C. T. Best ('C'), 6½ points, 20 francs.

"We regret that the O.C. was unable to be present in person, but our thanks are also due to him and to each and all the Officers for their interest and inspiration, and perhaps most of all to Captain C. Kerr, M.C., the President of the Committee, who negotiated so happily and successfully the several ticklish judgments on some of the events, and was able to keep smiling when the others were glum and cheerful in turns, as they watched and noted the successes and failures of their sections."

The Brigade and Divisional meets were held at the same place in their turn, while the culminating event, the Canadian Corps Sports, were held at Tinques on Dominion Day. Three Divisions of the Corps were still in reserve and were well represented both in the contests and at the ropes. The huge gathering was an impressive sight, it revealed the manhood of Canada at play. In the stern work that was soon to follow, this same manhood was to achieve the impossible and win for Canada fresh laurels to her already illustrious name.

This pleasure-camping, with its sunshine and security, led the Officers of C Section to moot the idea of a section dinner. All preparations were made for the feast to be held on the 10th, when, like a bolt from the blue, orders came on the 8th, for an immediate move. Everything was packed by noon that day and further orders awaited; but C Section's dinner went off at a tangent once again.

At last, then, comes the move for which the intensive training was the preliminary essential. For had not the Unit only the same week been practising loading and unloading stretchers by numbers? By 5.30 a.m., on the 9th, the Transport was on the road; the remainder of the Unit packed itself into lorries at 9 a.m. and sped to Maroeuil, a town between Arras and Lens, where the work was taken over from the Third Highland Division, the gallant 51st that had twice made such a desperate stand against the Boche a few months before. B Section went immediately into the forward posts, whilst C manned the M.D.S. The A.D.S. was at the point where the Ecurie-Roelincourt Road crossed the Lens-Arras Road; a well equipped station in light railway communication with the more important Aid Posts. The men were quartered in the tunnel dugouts under the road, airy, cold and damp.

The Aid Posts at Willerval, Longwood, the Tunnel and Chanticleer, by their provision of good dugout quarters and their proximity to the railroad left no doubt that this point was the 'cushiest yet'. The quarters at the Cutting were a little less savoury. The Huns' habit of allowing gas shells to drop so that the Cutting should become merely a channel for the fumes was particularly obnoxious.

What had become of the idea of a Reserve Army, including the Canadians, to be in readiness for the great attack? Had the Allies' manpower failed so that the reserves had to be drawn upon to hold the line?

But there were strategic reasons somewhere for this queer move. Sudden raids were organized all along the front, mainly to secure prisoners. On the 23rd, at dawn twenty prisoners were taken at the cost of as many wounded. This was done doubtless, not only to draw the enemy's reserves into this area, but also to find out exactly from the captured Huns, the state of their defence and forces in that particular area.

Since C Section had relieved B on the 20th, ordinarily A would have relieved C on the 31st, but none other than Imperial Regiments were pouring into the lines, posts and quarters, so that within an hour or so of their surprise, the Canadian Ambulance bearers were once more to leave an easy front.

The month of July drew to a close; rumors were heard of "something big" in the wind. Orders came through for hasty preparations for a move. The sandbagging of the horse-lines was dropped; the work of painting the transport wagons and ambulances was rushed incontinently. Mysterious warnings against the discussion of movement of troops were affixed in the men's paybooks. For some days past, news had been coming through that the latest German offensive at Chateau-Thierry had lost its punch and that the enemy's salient there was being driven in by the Allies. Was it the turn of the tide? At any rate something was causing a new current in the Canadian area.



## PART VI.



### CHAPTER I.

#### A TURN OF THE TIDE

Everyone felt that the departure from Maroeuil on August 1st was a move of infinite uncertainty. No one could feel but that somewhere there was an undercurrent of deep strategy, especially in the relief of the whole Canadian Corps. Rumor, as of old, was busiest when authentic news was scarcest. The Medicals were on tenterhooks fearing that their premature withdrawal from the line was to give them nothing more than extra rest before the next scrap.

All those bivouacs towards the stream were to be relinquished and some of them had become veritable hot-beds of luxury. Transports wagons were loaded, packs were jogged into their places on the men's backs and all was set for a hot and thirsty march by 9 a.m. "Quo vadis" might have been every man's unspoken question just then. Through the dusty country roads via Agnez les Duisans the Unit marched till noon, when a halt was called for lunch, after which refreshment the sweltering heat was endured till Warlus was reached about 3 p.m. Immediately on arrival at the billets the men were only too glad to get their boots off for the foot inspection. This in itself foreboded more marching in the immediate future. Not so for the Medical Students, however, for that evening there came orders that they were to leave the Unit at 6 a.m. next morning for Canada. 'Twas indeed a joyous time for the boys that night. Yes, there was no doubt that some folks had all the luck. This sentiment may have been emphasised by the promotion list that was published that night when Daily Orders were read.

Uneventful uncertainty marked the next two days at Warlus. The fact of a parade the next afternoon persuaded a few of the men to pick a path through the slushy streets to a favourable estaminet in the evening and the following day the rehearsal of the Bow Bells Concert Party consoled the boys a little for the inclemency of the weather.

Towards evening of the 3rd when all was packed and ready for the next move, affairs on the road began to prove interesting. Lorries seemed to be coming from all directions; lorries from this corps and from the other, then from all sorts of ammunition columns, till one believed that all the lorries in France were converging on to that main road leading west. Soon there was an unending stream of lorries moving like an infinitely long caterpillar gliding under the shade of the trees. Then the men copied the movements of the lorries. By 9 p.m., this mighty stream of now stationary lorries was paralleled by a mighty stream of men, including the XIth. The order came to jump in. Each vehicle was allotted its definite number of occupants and with the word: "a-bow-a-rd" the column moved off into the night.

Although it was not generally known at the time, one battalion of each division in the Canadian Corps had been sent on into Belgium where they went straight into the line, over the top in raids, leaving a man from each battalion as a prisoner in the enemy's hands. The 4th C.C.S. had packed, left Pernes and had set up their equipment in the same area. Surely the enemy must have imagined that the Canadians were performing some very perplexing will o' the wisp stunts.

In the meantime, the XIth Transport had joined the Brigade Transport Column, the XIth being the last in the line that stretched along three miles of roadway. Men, horses and equipment were in the finest parade condition, but it was only after a night's travel that the Transport boys realized that they were part of a column. Starting out at a good brisk pace at 9.20 p.m., and stopping only forty minutes to feed, the transport was on the road fourteen hours without a break and it was almost 12 o'clock next day



before wagons and limbers were parked and the men could turn in for a sleep. It rained all that night at Gezaincourt but the drivers under their wagons knew nothing of that. But not for long were the boys allowed the joys of sleep and dreams. At 8.30 p.m., the column was on the move again and kept the road until 11.30 a.m. the following day. Men fell from their horses sound asleep. There is nothing more wearying for the drivers than a long trek at night for they have to keep a watchful eye continually peering for the tailboard of the next vehicle. Twelve o'clock mid-day again with a burning sun in a blue sky overhead. A try is made for some arrears of sleep. But horses have to be fed and watered, men to be fed, and rations to be drawn, and little time remains of the rest-period at Belloy-sur-Somme allotted by the Staff.

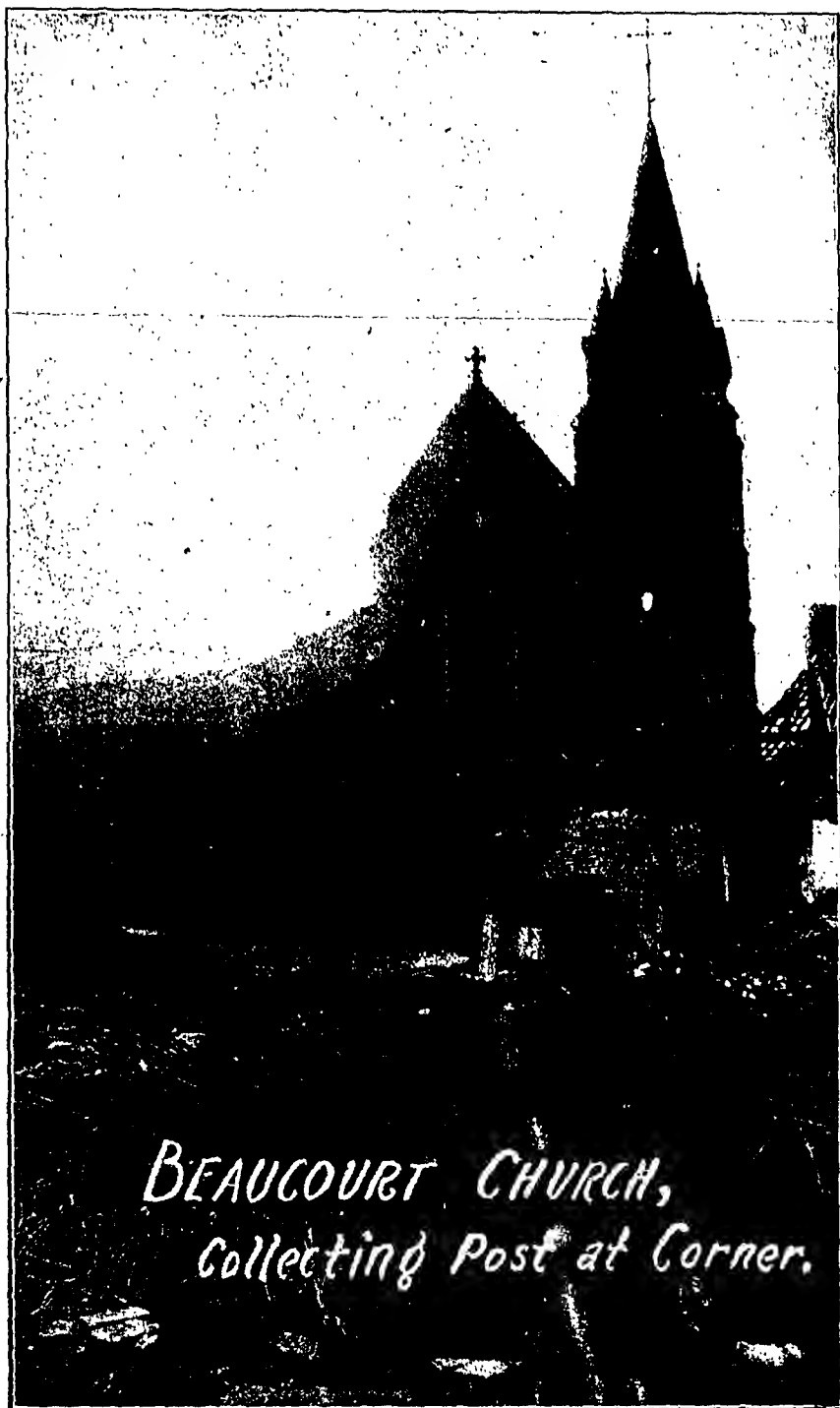
Away on the trek again at 9 p.m., the column travels along main roads that run for miles between avenues of tall trees, gratefully shady in the day-time, but by night making the darkness inky black. Between the rattle of wagons, the clatter of field kitchens and water carts, the tooting of lorries whirling by in the opposite direction, and the warning shouts and cries of the drivers or brakemen, there arises a confused din which stirs the drowsy peasant folk of wayside homesteads. Then comes an open piece of road in sandy country and all is quiet again save for the perpetual rattle of wagon wheels. That night the Transport joins the bearer sections of the XIth at Arbre a Mouches.

But what of that great lorry column with its hundreds of men aboard? Whither was it bound? Not for Belgium surely, for the curious Tommy inside his bus kept an eye on the stars for hours and discovered that he was being taken west and still farther west. Hour after hour he was rattled through the dark roads. Had he seen all the sign posts he would have traced his course via Wauquemin, Fosseux, Barly, Saulzy, Courtelle, Doullens, Domart, Conde, Airaines, finally to be disembarked at 5 a.m., at Woirel, a most peaceful and picturesque village, a dozen houses all told, in the rolling hills of Picardy.

Here the men were to lie low till further orders came for movement. The billeting places were mere skeletons of barns, but nothing seemed to matter since the day was warm and bright and everyone was tired. Ripening apples in the neighbouring orchards were less appealing than sleep—at least during the morning. Towards 11 p.m., the Sections assembled at the bottom of the main lane in the village where the yells of passing battalions going east gave but slight clue to future direction. By midnight the Unit had also commenced the hike that was but a small part of the great scheme of things which proved to be in Ludendorff's opinion, the 'death blow of the German Army.'

With occasional halts the march continued till 5.30 the next morning where very poor billets near Warlus (Picardy), again served as sleeping quarters for the day. No one had any desire to grouch. All were keyed up to a point knowing that now indeed was something afoot. At midnight, again the unit moved on through the darkness. The roads now gave some trouble in marching. They were narrow, full of ruts and muddy. Marching in fours at night is in itself a strain. It is difficult to keep in step even with the next man, and a straggling march is doubly fatiguing. What a difference from that cheerful jaunt taken two years before from Bramshott to Liphook. When a thoughtful order decreed that an advance party should proceed with a lamp and second party bring up the rear with another lamp. Again billets are reached during the morning, a Chateau near Arbre-a-mouches. The march continues at sundown through the night until dawn when a halt was called for breakfast outside the town of Moliens-Vidame, popularly known as Molly-be-damned. By this time the men had marched twenty-seven kilometres and after breakfast the march was continued through the warm scented countryside till Proussel, another six kilometres was reached at noon. Many a man's feet began to show signs of distress, but never a one gave in. There was but a few hours rest here, and temporary quarters were found in the top floor of a large factory. Some availed themselves of the pleasure of a dip in the clear stream that flowed through the town, at the expense of a sleep.

At 6 p.m. the march re-commenced through roads which began to show signs of traffic of war. The general direction during these night advances tended south and east. The last lap was decidedly east and uphill. Towards midnight, amid a grand display of searchlights the unit mounted the crest of a steep height overlooking miles and miles of a black-shadowed world where no lights gleamed but those that sought the raiding Hun above. Skirting round the high walls of an extensive black-shadowed mass of buildings and, entering a wide gateway, the foot-weary unit marched down several hundred yards of wide driveway into the rear premises of what proved to be the Asylum near Amiens. Doing no more than shedding boots and loosening collars, the men lay and slept in the corridors till morning.



*BEAUCOURT CHURCH,  
Collecting Post at Corner.*

Next day, August 7th, the whole unit refreshed itself with a regular wash, three regular meals and a perfect panoramic view of the countryside unfolded for miles around the Asylum walls. During the morning, squads were formed with N.C.O.'s placed in charge of groups. The afternoon was marked by a talk from the O. C. To the keenly interested bearers seated on the floor of a large hall, the Colonel, with maps on the wall to illustrate the proposed advance and objective of each brigade and division, unfolded the whole plan of operations and the part the medical units were to play in the big game to commence on the morrow.

For the exigencies of open warfare which the present plans of operations anticipated, much more elasticity in the methods of evacuation would be needed. In order that the ambulances should remain in touch with the battalions one squad would be definitely attached to, and advance with each infantry unit, the remainder of the ambulance working in conjunction with these squads.

In the inky darkness just before midnight of the 7th, all the bearers were taken by cars from the Asylum to Boves, where they disembarked and marched across country to Gentelle's Wood, each squad taking its quota of blankets, stretchers and rations for a couple of days. The mysteriously hushed movement of shadowy troops coming and going behind the black silhouetted Gentelles Woods was gradually broken only by the distant and nearer growing roar of the machinery of innumerable tanks, making the night more mysterious with their slowly approaching lights; so many dragons, one eye green, the other red. Suppressed excitement concomitant with assured hopes of success and victory thrilled every man as he waited for the dawn. At 3 a.m., when the heavier tones of night gave place to shades of grey, the hillside could be dimly seen strewn with recumbent forms of men blissfully unconscious of waking hopes or fears, while here and there through the deep morning mists a shadowy form hastened on some errand of duty.

Crash!! Every sleeper wakened to realities. When the reverberations had died away, men looked around and smiled querulously. One minute more! During these few moments activities everywhere increased as an ant-hill when disturbed becomes mysteriously full of life. One minute more and the fateful zero hour is at hand. Then, at the end of the long minute's expectancy, every gun for miles up and down the line bursts forth in an ear-splitting din. This terrific tornado of shells literally shook the surprised enemy from their holes. With the advance of the several miles of infantry, British, Canadian and French, the Bosche was swept off his feet by the oncoming barrage which, owing to fear and surprise, he was powerless to combat. With the exception of obstinate nests of machine guns, enemy artillery action was practically negligible. From all quarters German infantrymen accepted this unique chance of being captured so that within two or three hours considerable advance had been made and hundreds of prisoners taken.

With practically no delay every branch of the Corps moved ahead to keep up with the ever advancing waves of this great tide: planes sped back and forth overhead; tanks and whippets lurched up like monster bloodhounds on a scent, motor machine gun cars scurried up to advantage points; eighteen pounders, no sooner in action than they hitched up and galloped to a more forward position; signallers' limbers rattled forward paying out wire as they went, despatch riders smiling grimly, dashed past in both directions; cavalry, ready for action massed and moved eastward in the lee of the great woods, stretcher bearers advanced to bring back those whose brief share of work was suspended.

Passing through the demolished village of Domart and coming to the river Luce in which a few tanks had unfortunately got mired, the XIth, still advancing, crossed the bridge which had been left intact, and reached their jumping-off point about 9 a.m. Here they spread themselves across country and kept the field clear of wounded as far as Beaucourt, where a temporary collecting post was established. The whole of the area to this point had been cleared by dusk, when the infantry dug themselves in till dawn. There was small chance of a counter-attack; too many prisoners had been taken, too many machine guns captured to allow of any organization on the enemy's part. That night therefore was spent by the bearers in funk holes in the neighbourhood of Beaucourt. The town itself was no safe place, for the long-range guns of the Bosche determined on making the spot unpleasant. Some of the boys ventured to spend the night there and found a reward in the spoils of War.

The first day had been an unlooked for success. Not even the most optimistic dreamed such an advance could have been effected in a single day. Only two of the XIth received wounds, W. Irvine and R. Pearson, both of "A" Section. The day

had been a decidedly eventful one for the unit. At last the work approached somewhat to those scenes of ambulance life the boys had conjured up for themselves in Bramshott days, except for the fact that they could not return at night to hot coffee and mattresses. Who will forget the 8th of August as he, with the few others in his funk hole talked of the day's events? Who could but smile at the ineffectual attempts made to hide from the Hun plane which headed straight towards the straggling column and peppered the district with machine gun bullets? Who will not recall the thrill of satisfaction which came when the cavalry machine gunners, dragoons and lancers galloped past? How many too, failed to get souvenirs that day, and who were the lucky ones that got the souvenir rations? But the best souvenir perhaps was the treasure trove of W. Johnson, who bagged a stray pony and, procuring a saddle to match, then proceeded to salvage oats. When mounted and armed with two full sized Red Cross flags he was elaborately fitted out as a despatch rider. Having an occasion to go to Brigade Headquarters he was met by General Odium, who, with a smile of curiosity asked, "What's that you have there?" The rider replied promptly, "Prisoner of war, Sir," much to the General's amusement. During the night the animal was put out to grass with as much solicitude as a mother would fondle her first born.

At dawn the advance continued with no less fervour than the previous day. In brilliant sunshine, for the weather was never so favourable for open fighting, further progress was made and no heavier resistance was met. By noon the ambulance had got well ahead of Le Queşnel. North of this town the bearers came across a hastily evacuated Casualty Clearing Camp where enemy wounded had been left in all stages of neglect. There had evidently been time to collect nothing more than the medical equipment. The place had been originally an Imperial C.C.S. before the Hun drive in March, and during the enemy's occupation it had staffed a considerable personnel, since the dugout accommodation, even that far behind his line, was most complete; several deep shafts had been dug whilst two or three had been left partially constructed. Stopping here but for a brief spell, the boys followed up the advance, relaying the wounded to this place which was soon occupied by the XIth as a Main Dressing Station. Throughout that day most of the evacuation work was done under the cover of the large woods which lay ahead of this Station and from which the motor ambulances cleared to the Asylum.

The next day the advance continued so that the wounded were being cleared from the neighbourhood of Vrely and Warvillers. By noon the extensive open plateau between these villages became a grand military spectacle when thousands of cavalry massed here for a renewed attack. The fortunate onlooker standing behind the woods saw the squadrons of horse move forward and gradually extend to left and right till they vanished over the eastern ridge ahead in a long line of dots that disappeared in small sections until the last dot dropped out of view. During the morning of this day a collecting post had been established in Warvillers where the Y.M.C.A. had occupied a house dispensing chocolate and cigarettes to the wounded. Late that evening the XIth advanced bearers had reached the outskirts of Méharicourt and another relay post was established to the right of this village the next morning. Although this was Sunday it meant nothing to the soldier; the advance was not checked till Monday, the 12th, when the Hun, who had been retreating "hell for leather" for the last four days, now had reinforced his positions a few thousand yards ahead.

Soon an A.D.S. was established at Vrely with a succession of relay posts ahead to keep in touch with the boys attached to battalions. The casualties just at this time in the forward area were comparatively light, which, in view of the exceptionally hot weather, was rather fortunate. The fresh and almost unscathed countryside was daily bathed in brilliant sunshine. The only ill effects of this were the most vile and unwholesome stench where cavalry horses had been killed and lay out on the open plains. At night, the enemy bombing along the main roads for the entire distance between Méharicourt and Amiens was a most distressing feature. Vicious air fights by day and night were extraordinarily frequent and, in contrast with the battle for Passchendaele, the R.A.F. did heroic and magnificent destruction. Captain Paré's co-operation with the boys working in the forward area was most keenly appreciated, his fearlessness, comradeship and geniality were features till this time undiscovered.

During these four or five days the twenty-seven squads of the XIth were ahead clearing the wounded from the forward area. The remainder of the medical section at the Asylum were unprepared to receive casualties. The IXth occupied quarters nearby which were to be used as a dressing station. Within a few hours after the at-

tack the wounded poured in. The IXth, though aided by a number of XIth men, were soon overwhelmed with cases, many very seriously wounded, who received attention on arrival, frequently overlooking those less serious cases who had waited a considerable time. It soon became evident that there was some hitch in the arrangements, for medical assistance was most inadequate here. Later it transpired that instead of these casualties being evacuated to a C.C.S., the C.C.S. had been ordered to move into the Asylum. Preliminary secrecy, the unexpected depth of the advance and the camouflage movement of the 4th into Belgium, made it difficult to bring up the C.C.S. sooner, so that not till the second day did the 46th Imperial C.C.S. pull in. Loads of wounded arrived continuously through the night and the transport boys were brought in to lend help to the few dressers of the XIth. They secured several bales of blankets, bundles of socks and pyjamas and did excellent work in making the wounded as comfortable as possible till special treatment could be given. Every room and all available covered-in space was filled by morning. About 9 a.m. the IXth Field Ambulance sent across a few men to relieve the XIth men who had worked unceasingly for twenty-four hours.

When the 46th C.C.S. took over about noon, orders came that the remainder of the Unit at the Asylum would move forward; this was effected by 5 p.m. The party marched to Gentelles Wood where they bivouaced under the wagons. The next morning they assisted the IXth to handle the casualties at their post by the roadside where the work then was especially heavy. On the 11th, this party with the transport moved up to Beaucourt, arriving late in the day and remained there the night. Sleep was rather difficult due to the enemy bombing. A lorry load of cordite was hit nearby, incidentally forming a splendid landmark for all the other enemy planes in the area.

From Beaucourt the party proceeded next day to Vrely, where a few of the Unit had established an aid post. This now formed an A.D.S. The quarters here were poor shelter from the bombing and shelling. One shell pierced the roof of the stables, killing and wounding several of the transport animals. Fortunately none of the personnel suffered injuries. Many kinds of German paper bandages found here proved greatly helpful during the shortage of the Unit's own supplies. There were few facilities at Vrely for the establishment of a complete M.D.S., so that since the enemy had stemmed the tide of our advance somewhat, the relays of bearers now no longer needed forward were recalled and distributed between Vrely and the M.D.S. now fully established near Le Quesnel. This move was made all the more hurriedly since an enemy shell had dropped unexpectedly among a group of men who had got a "hunch" to appear on a Bath Parade before being sent down the line as casualties.

For the next few days the enemy had been particularly busy along the line with gas shells. While the battalions did little else but improve their positions they continued to send men down the line suffering from gas burns. These casualties afforded continuous employment for the dressers at the M.D.S., who removed all their clothing, fitted them out with pyjamas, then treated the burns with bicarbonate solution. Rumours had consistently gone the rounds that the division would pull out at any time now since the 3rd Division had been withdrawn, but the nature of the next move was wildly uncertain. However, since the weather continued intensely hot, no one grieved much, especially since a new issue of "M and D" had arrived from England. Evidence of the fact that a breathing space had occurred in the advance on the immediate front came to the M.D.S. in the nature of three or four car loads of wounded. Most of them wore smiles and each was anxious to tell the tale of the incident. Apparently a great game of "Crown and Anchor" had been proceeding in the support trenches, drawing its usual crowd of financially interested spectators. All went well till the group was suddenly disturbed, at which time some were killed outright and fifteen or sixteen had been wounded. The point of the incident seemed to be, that Fritz had taken such an interest in the game that he had put a five-point-nine on the "lucky old sergeant major."

On Thursday, 22nd, rumors were re-moulded when a party of French medical people made an extensive survey of the Dressing Stations at Le Quesnel, and on the 23rd, they solidified when some of the 4th Division troops pulled out of the line. On the 24th, men awoke to find that all the vacant spaces in and around the camp were taken up with the cars of an American Ambulance convoy and a whole Ambulance unit of a French Division. These two outfits gave much opportunity to compare notes and to make contrasts, the latter especially in regard to the curious antiquated rigs of the French, which did duty for wheeled stretchers and horse ambulances and



the American convoy were attached to make up the deficiency. That same night the XIth handed over the area to the French and once more marched away into the night, this time in a westerly direction. In the brilliant moonlight the surrounding objects were most clearly visible. It was a great chance for the Bosche airman and he took it. He worked merry mischief on all sides. The black, snake-like shadow of the marching column was deeply contrasted with the white road. To put the odds against the Bosche, the O.C. led the Unit off to the grassy side of the road. Fritz must have been looking elsewhere for the XIth was unmolested; not so fortunate, however, were the 78th Battalion who, owing probably to the plitter of bugles, suffered from the effects of a bomb which fell near the band as the battalion was marching out.

There was an undeniable thrill of exultation current throughout the Unit as the boys marched westward beneath the poplars along the Amiens road. It was a satisfaction which comes when something magnificent has been successfully accomplished, an inward pride which is the basis of a true *Esprit de Corps*. The XIth had taken its part in the most successful piece of strategy in the war; the impressions left on the minds would be deep and lasting. Feeling comfortably weary, the Unit reached Gentelles Wood about daybreak when, after an issue of rum, the men scouted around in search of empty dugouts, rolled up in their blankets and slept well into the next day.

## CHAPTER II.

### "DROCOURT-QUEANT"

The closing days of August marked the closing days of the spell of brilliant sunshine that had run its course through the summer of 1918. As the men of the Unit lay around in small groups under the trees of Gentelles Wood on that Sunday afternoon, little else was done beyond a comparison of notes and a few speculations on the future. Would the Hun come back at this stage or would we go in and attempt an attack on another front? No one could credit that he could ever again be so taken by surprise or driven back so completely.

On Monday the 26th, the XIth pulled out from Gentelles Wood over to Bois de Blangy, a more attractive spot, a fir plantation about four miles away to the north west from which height a magnificent view of the plains around Amiens and the Somme river could be gained. Remaining here for one night, the Unit assembled on a muster parade at 9.30 the next morning and later marched away to Longeau where it met the remainder of the Brigade and entrained at 3 p.m. Meandering casually through the tunnels under the city of Amiens, the train pattered on through the countryside, visited in turn the towns of Doullens, St. Pol and Aubigny and eventually jerked itself into complete inaction at 2 o'clock the next morning at Acq. Outside the railhead a long queue of waiting lorries took up the indifferent peregrination through Maroeuil and Warlus and intimated at Bernaville that their night's work was done. After some ineffectual parading up and down the dark streets, the Unit eventually billeted itself at 5.30 a.m. in a number of scattered furnished barns; the furniture consisting of chicken wire bunks arranged on the four-decked plan.

The night after an army train journey is well-spent in sleep if a man has a chance at all, and the boys were not wakened early by the sergeant-major bringing in breakfasts. The whole day following was spent in getting in shape for action which appeared imminent, and the chief excitement, apart from a sudden kit-inspection, was the news that Tomkins and Best had at last received their call to proceed the next morning to Corps and thence to Blighty for their commission course in the Machine Gun Corps. At nine o'clock on the 29th, the sections were under way and before long had swung into the tide of troops and transport going in or coming out of the Arras battle which had been staged by the High Command immediately the Hun resistance stiffened on the Amiens sector. A "restored" road ran windingly across a desolation of undulating country around Neuville Vitasse and Wancourt, and the full length and width of this road was covered with moving troops, transport, guns and tanks; halts were frequent and the heat together with the clouds of dust gave ample food for reflection. An incident on the march gave the only relief to monotony when a bevy of tanks waddling ahead of the XIth column met another bevy advancing in the opposite direction on the same narrow road. Unluckily, just as the two squads were meeting, a "tyre" or "caterpillaring" on the leading tank broke loose and the procession stalled. From nowhere appeared a staff-officer, red as to tabs and face, and perspiring profusely.



All his heated adjurations availed nothing to get that tank removed from the road. Angriely he ordered the tank next in line to pull around the derelict. The XIth boys had watched the proceedings with proper appreciation and added their amendments to the advice of "the staff," but as the second tank pulled off the road to come around, the nearest group of boys let out a yell and jumping to their feet dived for the nearest shell-hole. Others near-by followed suit as speedily as their wits and feet could act. The tank officer seeing by the signs that all was not well, stopped short—within a few feet of a "dud" twelve inch shell.

The column at last reached the outskirts of what had once been the village of Wancourt and the XIth took the road leading back towards Arras and halted beside a collection of dug-outs. With their usual luck, A section, being the head of the column, were soon lodged in the recesses of a typical Hun rabbit-warren capable of accommodating "A" Section, the officers, batmen and cooks. The remainder, being given leave to hunt shelter for themselves, it was not long before every hole in the nearby area was being fitted up as a "home" for twos or threes. When the Unit had been dismissed, the sad news was passed around that the Colonel had been killed. He had left Bernaville in a car to locate a Headquarters for the Unit near to Telegraph Hill. Having found a suitable place for a Dressing Station in an old Artillery H.Q., he had arranged for meals and quarters to be ready for the Unit on its arrival. Shelling was rather heavy on the outskirts of Wancourt. The Unit would soon be coming through the village. The Colonel, getting anxious, decided to take the car and turn the Unit off on another road to avoid the danger. He himself had passed safely through Wancourt and was nearing Neuville Vitasse when the line of tanks already mentioned barred his progress. Movement was practically impossible, although he was within sight of the Unit, so he decided to consult his map. While doing this a fragment of a high explosive shell bursting over head pierced his skull, killing him instantly. His body was placed on a stretcher and was taken in the car to a Dressing Station in Arras to the Xth Field Ambulance. The next day he was buried near other men of the Unit in the Villers au Bois Cemetery. The majority of the XIth Officers as well as the A.D.M.S. and representatives of the Brigade Staff attended the burial service which was conducted by Major Baines Reid. "It is given to few men to leave so much of achievement behind them at such an early age. Graduating before twenty-one, at the time of his death at twenty-nine, he was already widely known to an extensive circle of friends and admirers. After three years' practice in his profession he was appointed to the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Alberta and his career was full of promise. Keen in his work, respected by his colleagues, held in highest regard by his students; such was the late Colonel Moshier."\* To lose Colonel Moshier was to suffer one of the heaviest losses in the Unit's history since at that time he was essential to the proper carrying out of the XIth's part in the operations. His worth and his presence alone were invaluable at such a time but now also all movements were being carried out under secret orders and no one in the Unit but he knew what was to be done. Consequently there was no small amount of uncertainty in the Unit for several hours.

Two days later Major Paulin of the XIIIth was sent to take over command of the Unit in the place of the late Colonel. The new O.C. came at a most strenuous period and at a juncture when it was imperative to jump right into things, and in that the Major was to be commended. He felt, no doubt, that he had to preserve the traditions of scrupulous efficiency which had been set and maintained by his predecessors. This fact may have caused him later to become over-conscientious in his obedience to orders, and often to overlook the practical issues arising out of the exigencies of war.

On September 1st the boys were lined up at about dusk and proceeded toward Wancourt, passing through the outskirts of the village and across the country to take up positions well-ahead and just behind the infantry who had assembled for the great morning of September 2nd. The night march into the line was particularly exhilarating, with the odd shell falling promiscuously and Hun planes flying low on the lookout for the best spots for unloading their bombs. A lucky hit caught the leading lorry of a convoy taking up gasoline along a road which the bearers had just crossed and the XIth appeared conspicuously with the spot-light switched on full. In a very few moments the orderly column had disappeared and hastily camouflaged itself as separate and disinterested blades of grass on the wrong side of a grassy slope. However, by 10 p.m., the positions were reached and the bearers attempted to get a few winks of sleep, which was not aided by the fact that Heinie had chosen this particular

\*Extract from letter of Captain Ottewell.

spot in which to drop a number of "weeping-gas" shells. The night air turned bitterly cold and the wise old-timers who had scrounged Hun overcoats on the way in were the most successful in snatching a little sleep that night.

The orchestra of the barrage opened up its familiar overture with startling suddenness at the first hint of dawn, incidentally apprising the bearers of the fact that they had this time got a seat in the orchestra stalls. The immediate vicinity was crowded with six-inchers and eighteen-pounders placed well-ahead by a staff confident that the Huns would be driven beyond range early on in the morning's programme. A light mist hung over the land and only an occasional plane flew across to the German lines to take note of the progress of the attack. After the usual interlude to allow the infantry to get well away, the bearers started forward. The shelling was not heavy but some gas shells falling nearby as the parties crossed the famous Wotan line made the bearers adjust masks in regulation time which would have surprised our gas expert, Sergeant Hole. Crossing the trench system obliquely, the bearers came to the trenches around the cross-roads east of Vis-en-Artois, facetiously named on the maps *L'Esperance*, an apt title in piping peace-days no doubt, but now by no means appropriate, for in the area of the cross-roads Heinie was excelling himself in variety and profusion of missiles. Here Cooney's squads had been already working and busily carrying out cases down the road to a roadside collecting post where some "C" boys assisted. The collecting point was ill-chosen and owing to the shelling of the road, Ambulance cars were unable to get through to cope with the assembly of cases which soon lay out by the roadside without protection. It was immediately after he had safely brought in a case to this collecting point that Higgs of "C" Section was hit in the head and killed instantly by a piece of a shell which burst upon the road.

As in the Amiens drive, squads of bearers were attached to battalions during these operations. "A" Section bearers were carrying out cases from the 75th who had established themselves beyond the cross-roads south-east of Dury wind-mill. It was at this point in the operations that Captain Hutcheson, the M.O. of the 75th, did such good work that he was decorated later with the Victoria Cross. The stretcher-bearers were kept working steadily, for a great number of casualties were inflicted by the persistent machine-gun fire of the retiring Hun and where the 54th and the 78th had advanced over a slight rise beyond the Crossroads they had been mown down by snipers and Hun machine gunners perched in trees and on distant vantage points. The headquarters companies of the 54th and the 78th remained in the trenches to the west of the *L'Esperance* cross-roads until about 2 o'clock in the afternoon when they moved forward and took up positions in the shallow tank trenches eastward towards Dury. Here at about seven in the evening a squad of "C" bearers went to the assistance of, and eventually relieved the "A" boys under Coombes who were attached to the 54th. By night the Canadian divisions had penetrated to a depth of six miles on a very narrow frontage thus effecting an almost impossible feat, the breach of the Drocourt-Queant switch line and the threatened capture of the "impregnable defences" of the Hindenburg line.

But it was not until that afternoon, when the little party of seventeen released civilians, the first that had been seen, came into the dressing station at Villers le Cagnicourt, that it was fully realized that the turn had come. It baffled description to depict the joy of the little band. The plot of escape had been planned and carried out by a youth of eighteen. When our guns had begun to play on their village three days before, this lad had suggested that he, with a number of others, should hide, and bide their time till Allied relief should come. They were discovered by Germans, and ordered out and back, but in the confusion of the last moments, they were overlooked. But it was not until our Engineers found them, that the little party, huddled deep in an old vacated dugout, learned they were free. Their joy was unspeakable. They laughed, they cried, they kissed everyone indiscriminately. Free, free, after four and one-half years of most barbarous slavery. On their backs, on old wheel-barrow, in perambulators, this motley crowd carried all their earthly belongings. The sight would have been laughable had it not been so pathetic. While these refugees were waiting at the dressing station at Villers until they could be sent back into safety, some strange scenes were witnessed. One poor girl was slightly wounded and was brought in on a stretcher. She was, in fact, the first to arrive and the first feeling of amazement on the part of the orderlies at the sight of a feminine stretcher case gave way to a realization of a romantic side to Ambulance work. Heinie was making life pretty uncomfortable at this post just then, and it was pathetic to observe in the faces of the civilians the mingling of expressions of gratitude at their escape and of fear lest, after all, the

hate of their late oppressors should overtake them and destroy their hopes. One old lady, during this trying delay, discovered the remedy for fear and was seen handing hot coffee to our wounded boys who lay around on stretchers. The fugitives were at last placed on ambulances and lorries and removed to safety. A German prisoner, an inoffensive looking chap enough, handed up to one of the girls her bundle of possessions as she sat in the ambulance. If looks could kill, her look of concentrated hate and loathing for one of her late captors would have finished him then and there.

It was dark before the bearers were free to seek a place in the "tank" trench where the 54th Headquarters Company and details had dug themselves funk holes. But the soldierly O.C. of the battalion, with his kindly thoughtfulness, gave a corner of his very cramped quarters in a corrugated iron shelter in the trench and soon, curled up like kittens in a heap, the bearers were snoozing as only old campaigners can, when the low talk of the Colonel and the Adjutant reached their ears and heads were raised cautiously in the hopes of gaining inside information.

The Colonel had just returned from D.H.Q. and the Adjutant and M.O. were greeting him expectantly. "Well, we go over again," he exclaimed, and spreading out the maps in the candle-light, he explained the plan of attack. "Runners!" sang out the Adjutant, and the Company runners who had been sleeping outside promptly made their appearance, and were despatched with a curt order from the O.C. to bring in the Company Commanders from the line. Having issued this summons, the Colonel seemed to tire visibly. His face showed all the marks of the past day's strain. He dropped his face into his hands and remained motionless for several minutes, and even the fatherly persuasions of the M.O. failed to induce him to sleep awhile. A tot of rum pulled him together and the two spoke in low tones of the day's events, of brother officers who would be missing from the Mess and of the morrow's attack. Their conversation was interrupted by cries and a commotion outside, and sleeping men were aroused. Led in by two of our men, a big German private stood in the dim, flickering light. He was a pitiful wreck of a man whose wounds and cries would have touched the hardest heart. Repeated assurances of safety availed nothing with him, but a sharp word of command acted like magic. It calmed the man and called his will into action, again. He understood no word of English, so that nothing could be learned from him and his fears were only wholly allayed when the M.O. dressed his wounded head carefully and he found himself made comfortable for the night outside. Presently the Company Officers began to arrive and the boys in the corner lay low but listened eagerly.

The hum of talk increases until all are present, when recognition of military rank is resumed and the Colonel in low tones explains the situation and gives each his orders for the next day's attack. The whole Brigade is to advance at dawn behind a smashing barrage from a seven brigade artillery support, accompanied by as many tanks as can be refitted in the time. The Hun has that day sustained a great blow, and the knock-out is to be given in the morning. Such is the spirit of the orders. The Colonel has caught that spirit from his superiors and his keenness is so infectious that even the surreptitious listeners in the corner are instilled with it. Each Officer reports his position and strength, giving his map location, and when final instructions are received and compasses are set due east for the move to the Canal, the Officers pass out with a salute. Hardly had they disappeared before the Colonel bows his head again with weariness and strain, but now he is induced to doff belt, tunic and field boots and to stretch out beside the table and snatch an hour or two's sleep before dawn. Quietness reigns for half an hour. Nothing but the measured breathing of sleeping men makes itself heard within; only the occasional whine of a long-range shell passing over towards Arras and the distant bursts of desultory shell-fire along the roads break the peace.

A sharp ring on the telephone, answered in a moment by a signaller in the opposite corner. "Message, Sir," and the Colonel is awake and alert once more. "Hello — hello —" then a pause. "Yes—yes—who?" and a longer pause. Then "Yes—I think I have it, but you had better send a runner at once to confirm." Coolly he turns to the maps again and after a few minutes—"Doc, the show is off. That's a message from D.H.Q. and if it's what I understand, we won't be going over in the morning. The message was—Are you A.B.C? Well, this is X.Y.Z.—You were to meet a man to-morrow morning early.—Well, he won't be there."

Later on, wounded were reported from the Companies and Brigadier-General Odlum had been hit, so runners went from Rumaucourt to find the advanced dressing station and bring up a car. It was an unhealthy night passing from Rumaucourt back to L'Esperance and thence up to Villers les Cagnicourt, but Lundal and Casey

arrived after an adventurous trip and returned with Major Paulin and a Ford. The advanced dressing station of the XIth had been established in a wrecked tannery on the Arras-Cambrai road near Villers le Cagnicourt and routine line work was done for two days more until the brigade was relieved, when the unit moved back to the desolation at the rear of Wancourt for a rest period. Here old funk-hole homes were soon refurnished and though there were no accustomed attractions such as usually accompanied a rest period, the boys made the best of the conditions, appreciating the freedom of funk-hole life and the lack of camp fatigues and squad-drill. The weather was the worst imaginable for bivvy-life and rain storms were so frequent that baling operations became a nocturnal routine, and even the Quarter-master's heart was moved to supply tarpaulins to the worst sufferers. One memorable storm swept away the only three tents which graced the XIth dug-outment and in spite of gallant attempts at salvage the orderly room, canteen and medical tents foundered with all hands in the wee damp hours.

During this time the XIth had its first canteen and the return of Captain Kerr, Bill Lunda and Maddin from a purchasing expedition to Arras was hailed with cheers by the boys. According to Divisional arrangement each unit was allotted a pro rata share of each commodity obtainable, including beer, but the prohibitory convictions of the new O.C. led him to cut down the beer allowance to a minimum and to substitute more healthful commodities, such as tinned haddocks or beans. Only by keeping a watchful eye for the returning bus and by rushing the canteen at opening, did the strictest devotees of Bacchus manage to win a bottle of the precious fluid for their libations.

A rest period could under no circumstances be allowed to pass without a brigade inspection or a full-dress show of some sort and this time the occasion was the visit of General Currie to thank the brigade for its fine work in the recent operations. Another noteworthy gathering was the church parade with the 87th, when the Brigadier and his staff were present. At the close of the service General Odium, recently returned from a brief stay at a C.C.S. and still carrying his arm in a sling, gave a most inspiring address, outlining the full significance of the Arras battle and its relation to the strategical plans in both the western and eastern theatres of war. It was then that the men first heard of the splendid and complete victory of General Allenby's army in Palestine. General Odium warned the men that they were about to see heavier fighting and to bear a chief part in a great attack which would smash the German western front beyond hope of recovery. Without seeking to disguise the sterner facts he took the men into his confidence and gave such strong encouragement to hopes for a speedy end to the war that each man felt the call to a fresh effort and braced himself for it. The call came soon. Before re-inforcements could make good the losses in the Amiens and Arras battles orders came through for the move to a new attack, and at dusk on September 24th the XIth marched away from Wancourt south wards through desolated country and demolished villages until at midnight the column was halted and dispersed to dugouts in the ruins of Bullecourt.

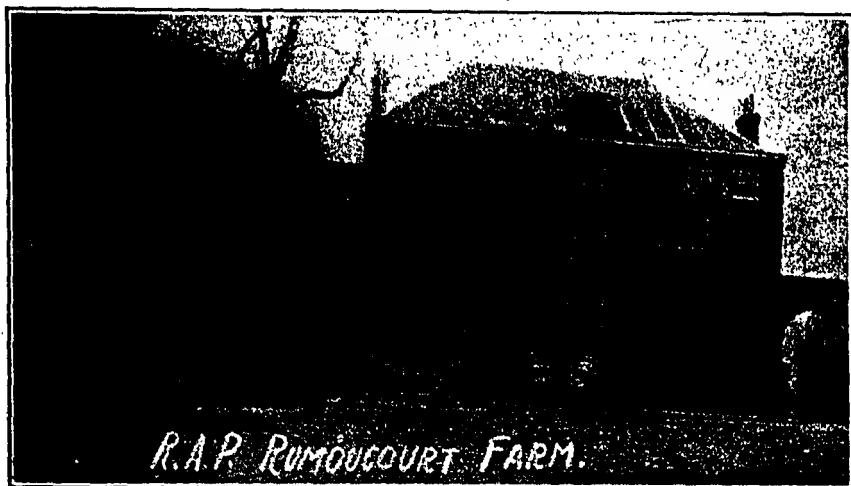
## CHAPTER III.

### CAMBRAI

Leaving Telegraph Hill at dusk on the 25th, the Unit, very much under strength, made Bullecourt about midnight. During the wait of twenty-four hours here the place was seen to be a veritable shambles of mortality. Scores of Australian and German dead told a tale of a fearful struggle. From this spot one could see, over in the distance, the green wooded hill of Bourlon Wood, known to be the next objective. Brown, the officers' cook, rather dissatisfied because there was not enough excitement, commenced to heat some water with a mass of cordite. Finding the result a little surprising, he resolved never to do it again. From here, J. M. Roe and A. E. Johnson were recalled for their commission course. During this period of waiting, squads were formed, each squad told off to carry an extra stretcher. On the 26th the whole moved forward to the Queant Dressing Station then occupied by the XIIIth Field Ambulance who were stationed in large three-storey dugouts. Here the XIth obtained all the necessary blankets and pushed ahead to the trenches, where they lay out in order to be ready for the following morning. Captain Stirling and Sergeant Downer had struck it rather lucky in finding a shelter, but the Sergeant was not sure whether the last Easter morn

had come when he glanced up in the daylight to discover at his head the comforting sign R.I.P. But the war was still on and nothing else had happened than that he had made his bed on a soldier's grave.

No worse layout of trenches could be imagined. The men had tucked themselves into cubby-holes at 2 a.m. and were wakened an hour later. At 8.30 the attack was to be launched and before then the bearers had to locate their battalions. Moving off in the deep slippery mud, Captain Turnbull went ahead with his men to the 75th Battalion; then Captains Kerr and Stirling with their sections to the 102nd and 54th respectively. Just as soon as they had reached their units the solitary warning minute-gun fired. Then came the barrage. The battalions moved forward in artillery formation to the Canal which was crossed near Inchy. The enemy's gun fire fell behind the moving infantry as the Ambulance followed, and W. S. Turner of A. Section was killed going into action. Battalions leap-frogging each other advanced as far as Bourlon Wood. Up to this point many casualties had been taken from the field and were carried back to a Collecting Post under the command of Major Neff about a mile behind the wood where they received attention and were then sent to Inchy and thence to the M.D.S. at Queant.



Meantime, the roads and the fields on all sides were covered with troops, artillery limbers and tanks, all moving forward into the battle. Daylight had arrived before the bearers were through the woods where the Hun resistance had been slight and the casualties few, three or four at most. But no sooner had the infantry deployed into the open than they were met point blank by 4.2 artillery and machine gun fire with open sights; for the railway Embankment ahead had proved a murderous vantage point. It was considered to be an impossible feat to take this wood and the British forces to the left and right were not to advance unless the wood was taken. The signal of the success in the wood would be announced by sending up gold and silver flares. There is no denial that the casualties on the open side of the wood were appalling, but the flares went up and the whole line to the right and left moved forward with the remnant of the Canadian Battalions.

Much work came in the way of the Ambulance men. Captain Kerr, whose men were clearing the 102nd, had his post in an old M.G. position to the right of the wood, Captain Turnbull located his R.A.P. right behind the wood, while Captain Stirling took his post in the B.H.Q. of the 54th at the cross-roads in the woods. W. A. Johnson, who was acting as runner for Captain Kerr, was caught by a machine gun bullet which fractured his thigh, and while the medical sergeant of the 102nd was dressing the wound he too was shot through the abdomen. This was a particularly bad spot both for machine gun fire and shells; so much so that even the wounded who could walk pre-

ferred to stay in the pits in the wood rather than venture to the Dressing Station. It was on this account that Maddin and Odlum worked so magnificently in picking up these casualties.

Towards night the Dressing Station was located in the Village of Bourlon in an old chateau where the men collected a few piles of straw and snatched a sleep till morning. During the night the enterprising 54th put on a "show" of their own and took a Hun Cavalry Headquarters, capturing a General and his staff. This mid-night manoeuvre made it somewhat easier to advance the next morning. News came through that this point was the farthest advanced point on the whole line and was being successfully held by the XIth Brigade. The next day, the morning of the 28th, the sections came back a few hundred yards to a group of old dugouts well behind the woods. Curiously enough, an old XIth man who was then with the C.M.R.'s as padre heard of the proximity of his old unit and came over to pay them a visit. They were more than pleased to welcome him as Captain "Chappie."

On Sunday, the 29th, the Unit moved towards Raillencourt, passing through Bourlon Wood where the trees had suffered badly from the shelling, and came out of the woods to be met by a perfect view of the spires and housetops of Cambrai piercing the morning mist. Seeing the possibilities of a steady advance with chance of loot ahead most of the men threw away their groundsheet. Reaching the Arras-Cambrai road, the Unit crossed over into a large field where the men lay scattered with the remainder of the Brigade which had also entrenched itself in the area. Up and down this main road the Bosche continually dropped his H. E. shells. One squad of the XIth sitting near the road was disturbed by a shell landing near them, fortunately a dud. Out of courtesy the men moved over to another spot, joining up with another squad. Again a shell landed near them, a live one this time which wounded Pringle and Brewer, both of whom died later. The nearest bearers commenced to render first aid to their wounded comrades when a third shell landed almost in the same spot. When the cloud had cleared it was found that Jarvis had been killed and Odlum wounded while aiding their comrades. Pringle was carried to a Dressing Station in a dying condition but fully conscious. He remarked sadly that he was sorry that he would not be able now to stay with the boys till the whole thing was finished. During the remainder of the day the men lay well down in the shelter of the shell holes, some of them salvaging shovels to improve their positions. A few were fortunate enough in finding shelter for the night in dilapidated dugouts. It is curious to note that the Ambulance alone suffered casualties, and the battalions none that day, and again on the morning of the 30th, as the Unit moved away, C. Section was again the victim in having a man hit.

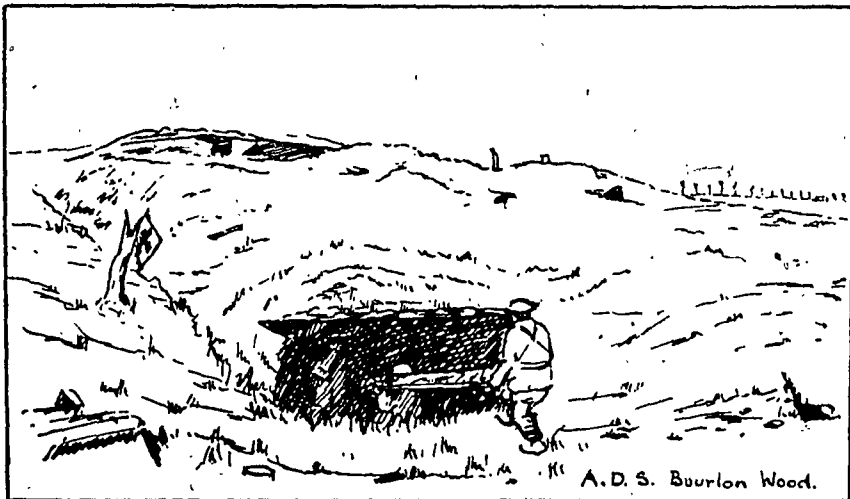
Pitch blackness enveloped all things as the whole Brigade moved into the region of the Cambrai-Douai Road, and only by the light of an occasional flare was even the line of route visible. The groping journey along the road was punctuated frequently by shelling on either side of the road till a full stop was made in a group of old trenches along the roadside in which the battalion had located itself preparatory to going over in the morning.

The game in the morning was billed to commence at 6.30, and it promised to be "some show" since it was ascertained that thirteen Boche divisions plus all their artillery and spare ammunition had been massed there for our reception. And they rose to the occasion. The Hun barrage was fearful and terrible to face; almost an unimaginable amount of H.E. and gas. Our men followed their own barrage at 6.30. It was hell. The resistance was intensely stubborn; hour after hour through three seemingly endless days the battalions worked through each other like a shuttle; the casualties in front of the embankment told of a grim and desperate struggle. The Brigade was pitilessly decimated—and it was extremely fortunate that twice the usual number of stretchers had been brought up—but the wounded were all cleared by the XIth with the assistance of a number of Hun prisoners.

A sad affair happened here to Walters, a very popular boy of the Motor Transport. A number of casualties had to be conveyed that night by motor ambulance to Arras. It was pitch dark and the roads were being shelled fairly frequently. E. C. Walters offered to relieve the regular driver of one of the detailed cars to take the trip. While speeding at forty miles an hour with the convoy past a battery of heavies, a shell landed behind the driver's seat where it detonated. The driver was instantly killed, the car continued running but finally brought up in a ditch where it was found later. Walter's body was taken up and buried the next day.

Colonel Paulin had kept right up with the moving infantry during this attack and established his dressing station at Raillencourt. His enterprising genius had caused some to remark that he had even settled there before it had been taken from the Hun. Nevertheless it was a good dressing station. But it was not to be held for any length of time for the Unit pulled out on the 3rd, completing a most disastrous but eventful trip in the line.

The boys were taken back part of the way in ambulances, eventually reaching Queant where they took over the Dressing Station just vacated by the XIIIth. Hun bombing was exceptionally severe in this region, so bad, in fact, that orders demanded that all horse billets should be dug below the surface of the ground. Consequently good horse-lines were at a premium. The Colonel, however, enterprising as usual, had spotted some excellent horse lines and proceeded without delay to inform the Transport Officer of their location. Bringing the T. O. back to the spot the O.C. pointed out the place and explained what a find he had made and how excellent these same horse lines would be. The Hun who was also interested in horse lines, dropped a 9.5" square in the centre of the equine paradise and even as the two officers gazed, the beauty of the earth vanished from their sight.



The Unit remained here till the 9th of October, when orders came for a move to the rear. At 10 P.M., the men marched till midnight when they embarked in lorries which took them back to the commodious but bare hutments of the Y.M.C.A. on the Arras-St. Pol Road. Rest of an uncertain kind prevailed in these quarters until the order came to move to the Railhead near Marceuil, where the Unit entrained for Cagnicourt.

## CHAPTER IV.

### ARMISTICE

It had been anticipated that after the strenuous work in front of Cambrai, a long rest would be granted the division. Indeed to the lay mind, it appeared quite evident that weeks would be necessary in which to rest, re-inforce and equip the sorely battered battalions for further fighting. Well, the High Command knew, however, the dire situation of the enemy. There could be no lull in attack, at this time. Every man was needed that the Hun divisions might be kept on the move. Only a few days, therefore, were passed in this camp during which—except for the usual bomb-dropping at night—nothing unusual happened.

In the afternoon of October 16th, the ambulance entrained at Agnes le Duisans and about midnight marched from the siding to Villers Cagnicourt. This, also, was familiar ground to many who had taken part in the forward work during the Droocourt Switch attack. Here, in fact, a dressing station was established in the basement of the old tannery which formerly had been used by Capt. Turnbull and Staff-Sergeant Whiston as an A.D.S.

Two days later the march was continued. At Ecourt St. Quentin, preparations were made to receive wounded, although no patients came through. Here was discovered a fair stock of drugs and surgical dressings in a chateau which had been used by the Germans as a field hospital. The drugs, for the greater part consisted of antiseptics, disinfectants and about twenty gallons of alcohol (potato spirit). The dressings were chiefly of paper, the bandages simply strips of lace curtains probably confiscated from the lace factories in the not-far-distant city of Valenciennes.

Bugnicourt was reached on October 18th, where the only event of note was a raid on neighboring fields, resulting in a good supply of fresh vegetables. This appropriation was quite justifiable in view of the civilian population having been driven before the retreating enemy.

The next move was to Aubercicourt where the night of Oct. 19th was passed in a large school house which had been used as a field hospital by the enemy. At nine o'clock the following morning the unit moved off and on the outskirts of the village of Abscon encountered the entire civilian population. Their thankfulness at deliverance from recent captivity found expression in much cheering, flag-waving and proffering of "café" and "bièrré" from their very scanty supplies.

While halted here for a short time, Brigadier General Odlum arrived in his car which was immediately besieged by the people and decorated with flags and flowers. Later in the day Escaudin was reached. Right royal was the welcome extended by the people who, by every means at their command, sought to convey some sense of their appreciation of deliverance. Many, too, were the stories told of cruelty and oppression suffered under enemy rule. Billets for the nights were located in a large building which had been a brewery in pre-war days but had more recently been used as a prison for British soldier prisoners.

Here was abundant evidence of the abominable stuff offered to prisoners as food by the enemy. Two huge boilers contained the remnants of a meal. In the one was a brew of boiled chunks of burnt roots, chicory, beets, etc., which had been served up as coffee. In the other were the remains of a soup brew containing poorly crushed grain, pieces of carrots, turnips and beets. This, together with loaves of sour, black, rye bread formed the sole diet of the unfortunate prisoners according to information received from the French civilians.

The following day, Oct. 21st, the march was continued in a north-easterly direction, passing through Haveluy and finally reaching Aubry. Here, preparations were at once put forward to receive and evacuate wounded. The line was then fairly quiet but many casualties resulted from intermittent shelling of the village. Showers of gas shells, too were here sent over by "Fritz." One of these landing in "Fat" Landry's culinary department caused a rapid move down the street, only to be visited there again in the early morning hours by one of the "H. E." variety. "Fritz" evidently had designs on "Fat" but, fortunately, nothing more than a shower of brick dust in the kitchen resulted. The only occupants of the village were some very old people who had remained to guard their homes, thinking, evidently, that life held nothing better for them elsewhere.

After nine days of comparative inactivity here, the sections were again mustered in full marching order and at 1.30 p.m. on Oct. 31st. moved off in a drizzling rain.

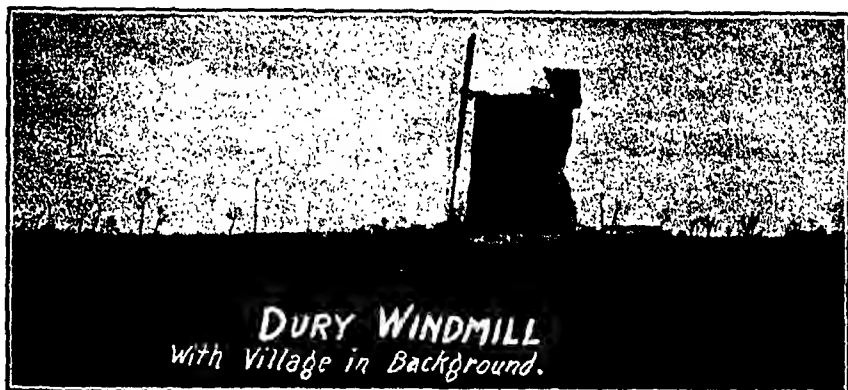
Rumours had been rife for some time of a pending attack on Valenciennes, which now seemed to be confirmed by the movement of transport and guns all in an easterly direction and in front of the city. En route Canal L'Escant was crossed by way of a pontoon bridge, the permanent bridge having been blown up by the retreating enemy. The small village of Thiant was reached late in the afternoon. Quarters had been assigned the Ambulance in a factory which, for size, left nothing to be desired, but for comfort, much. Roofs afforded protection against neither rain nor shells; mud was everywhere and altogether the outlook was one of dreariness and misery.

At 5.20 o'clock the following morning, November 1st, the barrage opened, the 10th Brigade making the attack and the clearing being done by the XIIIth Field Ambulance.



News received in the course of the day was very reassuring. Other divisions had taken 35,000 prisoners while the 4th Division was credited with the capture of 9,000. The day at Thiant was spent preparing for action. Bearer squads were made up and detailed to the various battalions and at night an advance party under Major Harte moved forward to the XIIIth A. D. S. at Maing. The 11th Brigade would attack the following morning, although reports coming through seemed to indicate that the enemy was fast retreating and that little resistance need be anticipated. Valenciennes, in the meantime, had been surrendered after some stiff fighting.

The morning of Nov. 2nd, found the advance party "standing to" at the same time, standing around a large pail of Irish stew in course of preparation. In anticipation of a long fast, it had been voted upon and unanimously agreed to have at least one glorious feast, while yet there was time and opportunity. Accordingly, potato and onion rations were pooled, turnips and leeks salvaged from adjacent gardens and the whole turned over to Grand Chef "Barney" McClelland. But, alas! how replete is life with disappointments! Orders to move forward came ere yet the stew was half done. The pail was therefore carried forward and cooking recommenced in the next village, only to be interrupted, as before. Again was the pot shouldered and borne with grim patience to the third village. Here, in a cellar waited the hungry band, the while "Barney" wrestled above with a rebellious fire and in the end contrived to upset the stew amongst soot and mire. Ye gods! were ever worthy gentlemen so treated.



Passing through Framiers, where earlier in the day a former officer of the Eleventh, Capt. Dunlop, had been killed, the advance party halted late in the afternoon at Aulroy. Here, the basement of a large mansion was speedily cleared of debris and an A. D. S. established. Some wounded were cleared during the night but casualties, on the whole, were very light by reason of the enemy's rapid retreat.

The following day, Nov. 3rd, an advance party under Major Neff, went forward from headquarters to take over the German hospital in Valenciennes. At no previous date had anything quite so desirable as this fallen to the lot of the XIth. It had been a Girls' College in pre-war days—quite large enough to billet a brigade and modern in every detail. The main body of the Unit followed on and by next morning an M.D.S. was in full running order. From this time on, Battalion scouts experienced difficulty in keeping in touch with the enemy. The whole brigade was, in consequence, kept continually on the move. No sooner was an A. D. S. located than orders came through to move forward.

In the afternoon of Nov. 4th the A. D. S. personnel left Aulroy, passing through Valenciennes, heading south-east and finally halting for the night in Marly, about one mile east of the city. Everywhere on this trip was ample evidence of the effectiveness of the barrage of Nov. 1st. Scarcely a yard of ground had been missed as the storm of shells swept steadily forward, dealing death and destruction. Valenciennes was a city of dead. Streets were strewn with German bodies, amongst which civilian elders and children moved in apparent unconcern. Truly a grim picture of

war, one which, if it could but live in the memories of generations to come, would surely be sufficient antidote to the glamour which has ever surrounded warfare.

Quietness marked the night of Nov. 4th at Marly. The next day at noon a short move was made about two miles east on the same road. Here some sick cases and a few slightly wounded were evacuated. Enemy shelling gave evidence of random firing and indeed his retreat seemed to be but poorly covered.

On Nov. 5th, the A. D. S. was established in Saultain and later in the afternoon moved to Estreaux. The same night the entire 4th division was relieved by the 2nd. the Xith being relieved about 10 p.m. by the IVth Field Ambulance. Rumour was already rife of approaching cessation of hostilities but rumours, after all, were only rumours, and to those, little heed was paid by the majority. The weather, at this time, had become highly disagreeable. Heavy rains and endless traffic had combined to make much mud but despite the outward misery of things, squads were light-hearted enough as they plodded back to headquarters in Valenciennes. Here was comfort, security and a city of interest, awaiting exploration.

The city theatre had, in the meantime, been taken over by the divisional concert party—"loved long since and lost awhile."

Reservation for the Xith had been made for the night of Nov. 6th and a most welcome diversion it proved after the long experience of sterner business.

The following day, equipment was packed and the dressing room handed over to the incoming C. C. S. Such had been the advance that Valenciennes was now much too far in the rear for an M. D. S.

Nov. 8th found the unit again on the move. Valenciennes was traversed westward by way of the railway station and canal which separated the city from its suburb Anzin. The condition of the railway station and track here was a revelation of the accuracy and effectiveness of Allied bombing. Doubtless, the sight stirred many to thoughts of repentance for the hard things said of our airmen, on occasions when the Hun was permitted to pursue unmolested his dirty work behind our lines.

Arrived in Anzin, a more or less wild scramble ensued for the most desirable billets. And such billets! Real houses with real furnishings, fires and abundance of coal, pianos and pillows, crockery and carpets—everything, in fact, to gladden the heart of an exile. Yet were these relics sad enough too. One could not but wonder about the fate of the inmates and what sorrows and indignities they had suffered during the long period of enemy occupation.

The following day, quarters were put in order for the reception of sick, "B" section having charge. For the remainder of the unit, a little P. T. in the morning and an occasional route march in the afternoon comprised the daily duties, leaving much time for sight-seeing and general recreation.

Then came the staggering news of November 11th. . . . . Complete and overwhelming in its suddenness and its magnitude, the true import was too vast, too deep for minds so settled to the business of war, that had been accepted as a life-work. The universe of khaki in which each man's civil identity had been submerged became very speedily disintegrated. Almost forgotten hopes and ambitions re-rose in each individual mind, personal issues presenting future problems which even the khaki mess-mate could not share. Can it be wondered then, that no outward manifestation of such inexpressible thoughts broke the continuity of the ordinary army routine on that day. Gladness there was and deep thankfulness in the hearts of all, but expectations of an early home-coming were speedily dispelled by the news of the proposed occupation of German territory by allied troops. Forthwith came lectures on march discipline and everything which, if observed, might help to impress the inhabitants with the efficiency of the Corps.

Equipment had to be scrubbed and blanched, all shortages in equipment made good, new clothing issued to the ragged ones, and everything made ready for the triumphant march into Germany.

Simultaneously, preparations were silently being put forward for a "B" Section banquet. A chateau in the vicinity had been chartered for the occasion and the great dining hall put in order to the tune of cut glass, palms and plush-covered chairs—all under the skilled direction of Staff Sergeant Whiston. Unfortunately, G.H.Q. had not been taken into the reckoning and ere the feast could be set and the guests met, orders came through for parade in full marching order.

Dinner was served at 10.00 a.m. on Nov. 15th, and at 10.30 a.m. the Unit marched off to Germany via "the long, long trail awinding."

During all this and successive days a continuous stream of refugees was encountered, all moving back toward Valenciennes from occupied territory. A more heterogeneous mass of human beings it would have been difficult to imagine. Vehicles of every size, type and condition had been requisitioned to convey the most precious of family belongings, while the motive force was supplied, indiscriminately, by old men and women, dogs, cows and an occasional broken-down pony. Supply trucks returning were gaily bedecked with flags and bunting. Each carried its quota of human freight, the fairest damsels quite evidently having been carefully selected by the drivers to occupy the place of honour in front. All, though practically destitute of food and decent clothing, were yet apparently quite happy—so sweet a thing is human liberty, even as life itself. The town of Quevrain was entered at 5.15 p.m. where billets were assigned in the Hotel de Ville. All night refugees continued to pour in, many by reason of scarcity of housing, being compelled to camp in the streets.

The town of La Bouverie, some five miles south-west of Mons was the next objective. Leaving at 10.30 a.m. on Nov. 16th, the march continued until 2.30 p.m. with very few rests in the interim. This was all the more regrettable because unnecessary and due entirely to the officer in command not being sufficiently familiar with march routine. Moreover, this failure on the part of an officer to meet fairly the exigencies of the situation led to the only court-martial in the history of the Xith. Sergeant-Major McArthur, for no just cause, and while acting solely in the interests of the men was duly placed under arrest and later by order of Court-martial reduced to second class Warrant Officer. An alleviating feature, however, of this unfortunate incident was the fact that the officer in question was not one of the originals who were gentlemen all and could never have been guilty of such conduct. Further consolation, too, comes from the knowledge of the later reinstatement of the Sergeant-Major.

In La Bouverie the unit was at first billeted in the theatre or Maison du Peuple, but such was the hospitality extended that after the first day practically every man had been invited to a private house where hot shaving water, polished boots and cafe at all hours, were among the luxuries enjoyed. On Nov. 18th, a concert was staged in the theatre by the 54th Battalion assisted by the local reed band and several talented singers.

Previous to the war, this band had been one of the largest and best in Southern Belgium, consisting then of 100 pieces. On this occasion, some sixty were gathered to play and, in spite of the fact that no rehearsal had been held during the four years of German occupation, the playing was of exceptional merit. Dances were also arranged for the Canadians in town. These were well patronized by the mademoiselles and entered into by all with much zest.

All too soon for many, orders to move again were received. Leaving at 9.00 a.m. on Nov. 20th, a march of some eleven miles brought the Unit to the outskirts of Symphorean—just three kilos from Mons. Here, billets were somewhat less desirable, the entire Ambulance being confined to a large mansion, other ranks in the rooms above, officers' mess below and sergeants' mess in the greenhouse, which latter was thought by many to be entirely appropriate. This period was fruitful of much sight-seeing. For some time, parties of fourteen were conveyed daily by motor cars to Brussels, visiting en route the field of Waterloo.

Mons being within marching distance was also very frequently visited by the majority. A theatre party was arranged and the old divisional concert troupe seen in "H. M. S. Pinafore." Many, too, witnessed the triumphant entry of King Albert of Belgium into the city.

At this time, a very brief illness terminated in the death from pneumonia of Pte. Grills of "A" section. Coming to the Ambulance as a re-inforcement in the spring of 1918, he had speedily gained the affection and esteem of all by his quiet, kindly way and steadiness under trying conditions. The burial in Mons cemetery was attended by the greater part of the unit.

Billets at Symphorean were vacated on Nov. 24th, and the march continued north-easterly into the mining district. Throughout the day, a steady rain fell, rendering the march a very disagreeable one. A warm reception, however, awaited the unit in La Louverie which was entered at 2.00 p.m. Sisters of the convent here were out in force and all progress barred until every man had been served with hot coffee—"sans sucre, sans lait."

Private billets had been secured by the advance party and in short order all were being ministered to by kindly people. The next day's march brought the Ambulance to Courcelles, a bare-looking town on the road to Charleroi where the night was passed in the public hall above an estaminet.

The next day, Dec. 14th, passing through the town of Flouris, the brigade was inspected by General Rawlinson. Conditions for this were none too favorable, rain having lent to uniforms and caps a very bo-draggled appearance.

Sunday, Dec. 15th was passed in the scattered little village of Trongruine and finally, on Dec. 17th, the move was completed on reaching Ramillies-Offus, a village in the sugar beet country between Namur and Liege.

The 1st and 2nd Divisions, in the meantime, had entered Germany while the 3rd and 4th were billeted around Liege and Namur, the ultimate intention being to relieve the former with the latter, some time after the New Year. Ere the relief could be effected, however, orders for demobilization were received by G. H. Q.

This 4th Divisional billeting area was in many ways highly undesirable. Villages were small, low-lying, badly drained and made up for the most part of houses of a very mean order. Moreover, at this particular time of the year the atmosphere was everywhere polluted with vile odours emanating from composts of beet pulp and tops, prepared by the villagers for cattle feeding. This feature of Ramillies-Offus is perhaps best described in the words of Capt. Kerr on giving directions as to the location of his billet—"You pass a dozen different kinds of smells and when you come to the worst, that's my billet."

On the whole, a rather disagreeable time was spent in this village. Rain fell almost continually and the surrounding country being bleak and cheerless there was little to entice men abroad. Classes in various subjects were resumed, but by reason of the growing restlessness failed to attract many students.

Christmas, with the prospect of a break in the monotony, was drawing near. A chateau about three kilos from Ramilles had been taken over as a rest station for brigade sick. Here was ample accommodation for the staging of a Christmas dinner and, in due course, the machinery of preparation was put in motion. Major Neff, with indefatigable energy, scoured the canteens for supplies and despite the great shortage he succeeded in securing an abundance. Staff-Sergeant Whiston, bearing the laurels of former successes, was duly relegated to the post of D.D.S. (Director of Decorative Services) whereupon, armed with several water bottles of the good "Jamaic," the wily "Sammy" set forth to regale the unsuspecting but susceptible caretaker of the chateau. Thus was all made easy for the feast—everything necessary, in the way of crockery, table cloths, chairs and evergreens being handed over with the utmost good will.

At 11.00 a.m. on Christmas Day Ambulance and Transport paraded and after the usual vaudeville performance of Transport men forming fours, the parade marched off to the Chateau. Whilst awaiting dinner in the courtyard, a rather amusing incident was the blanket-tossing of Capt. Paré. The occasion was the announcement in Daily Orders of his award of the M. C.; or, perhaps it were nearer the truth to say that this award furnished the excuse for a demonstration of good feeling towards this officer on the part of all. Fearless under all circumstances, possessed of good judgment and ever having the welfare of the men at heart, he had long been held in the highest esteem by those under his command. Humorous too, in a degree—who shall readily forget his recital on the sick parade of a labour battalion—"Are you seek? What iss the matter with you? Have you pains in the boddee? Ah, well! to-day, I give you pills. You come to-morrow, again, I give you Hell!"

Dinner being announced, the entire Ambulance was duly seated after having been surreptitiously served with a "punch" appetizer, because at this particular period the rum ration was officially non-existent in the unit. Eatables were served by Officers and N.C.O.'s, the while a constant barrage of good-humoured verbiage was maintained. Everything went like clock-work and, in due course, tables were cleared and a concert programme in progress. The N. C. O.'s dinner was served upstairs in the evening, to which the local priest, the miller and the Chateau caretaker were invited. The speech of the evening was delivered by the priest—a man of fine presence and well educated, the gist of which was a eulogy of Canada's part in the war and the recital of Belgium's sacrifice—all delivered slowly and distinctly in French

so that few found difficulty in understanding. The following day, the children in the neighborhood were mustered by the priest and presented with the remnants of the feast.

About this time came news of the decision to demobilize the Canadian Corps. Demobilization of divisions was to have taken place in the order of arrival in France but as some time would necessarily be lost in bringing the 1st Division back from Germany, it was decided to proceed with the 3rd Division then billeted around Liege. In the meantime, the suggestion of General Odum respecting the unsuitability of the 4th Divisional billets prevailed and on Jan. 4th a general move was made back to the environs of Brussels. The XIth after a three days' march, arrived in the village of "Notre Dame au Bois", just nine kilos from Brussels. Capt. Paré had preceded the Unit in order to make complete billeting arrangements, but owing presumably to the attractions of Brussels, the arrangements were found, on arrival of the Unit, to be very much incomplete. The parade was dismissed and considerable "rustling" ensued, consequently in a short space of time every man had comfortably quartered himself.

Here was a different environment from that which had just been forsaken. Houses and people were of a superior order; roads were good and the village quite picturesque in its setting as it nestled up to the great beech forest—the *Chausée Royale*. Across country could be seen literally acres of glass since this area was the center of the grape-growing industry—an industry of mushroom-like growth which has created wealth for many engaged in it. Some three kilos distant from Notre Dame were the villages of Ouderghem and Quatre Bras, both connected with Brussels by electric cars. Altogether, therefore, the camp was well chosen for a sojourn of nearly four months. Military duties being far from exacting the greater part of this period was devoted to sight-seeing. Two-day passes to Brussels, Liege, Namur and other places of interest were granted, the only limiting factor being the individual's pay balance which, in the majority of cases, was speedily reduced to a minus quantity. The *Musée des Beaux Arts*, the *Theatre de la Monnaie*, the *Musée de Congo* are among the memories which will doubtless live forever in the minds of those who had the opportunity of seeing these cities. Local amusements were arranged at this same time for soldiers and civilians. Dances were held weekly, the music being provided by different battalion bands. These, together with many cinemas provided by the ever-active Y.M.C.A. were well patronized by the local people and served to recompense them in some measure for the many kindnesses and attentions paid to the troops. Classes in various subjects were re-organized and special lectures delivered from time to time by representatives of the Y.M.C.A. and Brigade staff. Interest in the work, however, rapidly waned after the departure of a contingent of the most diligent in the pursuit of knowledge for "Blighty", there to resume studies in real earnest in the *Khaki University*.

From this time until the beginning of the move homeward was perhaps the most monotonous period between the end of hostilities and demobilization. Inactivity and growing impatience to see the last of army routine combined to make life in the village somewhat burdensome. A banquet for "B" Section designed and carried into effect by Staff-Sergeant Whiston proved a great success. An epidemic of "Flu" at this time was sweeping over the area, carrying off many of the older civilians and many soldiers. Of the XIth two succumbed after a very short illness and were buried in the cemetery of Namur. These were Drivers Spencer and Forster—both originals of the Horse Transport. In order to check the spread of infection, concerts, dances, etc. were discontinued—all of which tended to aggravate the situation. Demobilization of the other divisions, however, was proceeding rapidly and the time of the 4th Division was drawing nigh, according to information imparted by Gen. Currie on the occasion of a brigade inspection. Nominal rolls of the Ambulance personnel proceeding to different destination points in Canada were forthwith compiled; unit equipment was by degrees turned in to Divisional dump; horses turned over to the Divisional Train and everything made ready for the grand departure.

Finally, on April 24th came the great day. The unit was to be conveyed to the rail head at Wavre in motor lorries. The parade was called for 9.00 o'clock but long before the hour of departure the village streets were busy with life. On every hand was evidence of genuine regret on the part of civilians.

## CHAPTER V.

## HOMEWARD BOUND

The unit had put in three very comfortable, and for the most part, enjoyable months in the village of Notre Dame au Bois, on the outskirts of Brussels, when orders came to have the men distributed according to their various demobilizing areas. Very keen regret was felt by the majority of the Officers and men that they were not to be demobilized in Winnipeg, where the unit had been mobilized and had received its early training. But long ere this they had become used to these unusual happenings in the army. The fact that they were to be sent back shortly to dear old Canada was all-sufficient.

The village folks had vied with each other in their kind treatment of the boys of the Unit, and when the morning of departure came, April 20th, they turned out en masse; from the stately priest, the jovial mayor and the stern school teacher, down to the lowliest workmen in the village. They tendered the Unit a farewell as genuine as it was simple and unassuming. When the unit had been lined up to be loaded into the waiting lorries, Capt. C. Kerr, M.C. in charge of the parade, called for three hearty cheers for the Belgian people, and particularly for the village folks of Notre Dame au Bois; and the sombre beech forest to the back of the village echoed to the hearty cheers.

As the lorries moved off, children cried, young maidens waved handkerchiefs frantically, while the old people walked slowly away to their work, feeling that the life had gone out of the village with the departure of their "bons camarades," the Canadian boys.

The unit entrained at the considerable town of Wavre. Everything had been arranged and worked with clock-like precision, and the unit was soon loaded in very comfortably arranged box-cars. The "Y" as usual were on hand and during the next few days, from their car supplied "eats," games, hot water for tea, and other comforts all along the way. And yet some of our "base warmers" have the audacity to come home and condemn the "Y."

The first stop was made at Mons. Here the men detrained, had a good wash-up, and an ample supper, provided so thoughtfully by the entraining Officers. As our boys had been billeted on the outskirts of Mons for a month on the march forward, they spent their few spare moments looking over the alterations in the city since the armistice in November. Already machinery was at work in the vicinity of the slag heaps which had formerly been the hiding places of enemy machine guns and the location of "O Pips."

At daybreak next morning the boys were awakened by "Wake up and have a look at what is left of Albert." Since our sojourn there in the cold, wet Fall of 1916, Albert, with all its memories of our first experiences of warfare, truly had its share of battle. The old school house, occupied by the XIth that fall, for seven busy weeks as main dressing station (and a good dressing station it was), was a complete wreck. In vain they looked for the workshop, where Captain Joe so miraculously fed the seven thousand five hundred. The figure of the leaning Virgin and her infant Child, so familiar to hundreds of thousands of Canadian soldiers, no longer surmounted the old cathedral; the cathedral itself was a ruin. Through the morning mist, the ruins, with the few returned civilians moving among them, stood out spectre-like. As the troop train moved out, involuntarily many eyes turned towards the little cemetery where brave comrades lay at rest, oblivious to all that last long summer of strife, when the enemy returned to disturb their last resting places with bomb and shell.

A brief stop was made at Amiens, that busy distributing point, the goal of the German ambition in the spring of '18, when they hoped to cut off the French from the British army. Amiens! from which the great Entente advance commenced, and where open warfare was first begun. What a world of memory it had for every unit of the Canadian army. Here re-construction was in full swing, and much of the old life had returned.

At daybreak of the second morning the unit awoke at Le Havre. What a change in the organization at this part from that of 1916, when the unit landed there. Many familiar faces were seen and among others was that of Colonel "Spurge" Campbell of the 4th C.C.S., then in charge of a splendidly organized medical, bath and clothing establishment. As the city of Le Havre was enjoying at one and the same time a street railway strike and very inclement weather, the unit was more than pleased when its stay there was suddenly brought to a close at the end of the third day. The XIth

embarked on a small American steam packet. It had just disgorged a cargo of German submarine prisoners, sent over to help fill in trenches in the devastated areas. Big, fat, well-fed fellows they were, living examples of how England treats her prisoners.

The Channel was very rough and the trip across was not at all a social success. At daybreak the boat steamed into Southampton, where disembarking, feeding the men and entraining was carried out with the same precision as all other movements of the journey. Various rumours were afloat as to the destination ahead, but when the train finally came to a halt at Liphook, there was a feeling of coming home and memory went back to the incidents of the Unit's training at Bramshott on 1916. If orders had been given to go in search of the "P" in "Gentle's Copse", the unit would not have been surprised.

The short march from Liphook to Bramshott was easily made and the men and Officers were soon quartered. Bramshott, like all Canadian camps in England at the time, was a busy hive of men. No sooner was the unit quartered than it was warned that a section was to join other sections, one each from the XIIth and XIIIth Field Ambulances, to take part in the big Colonial Parade in London three days later. On that date the Ambulances of the 4th Division were under Lieut.-Colonel Anderson, Captain C. Kerr, M.C., leading the section from the XIth, and Captain Murray that from the XIIth. The day was superb for old London, and the boys who were privileged to take part forgot the early morning march to Liphook in their pride at representing Canada in the Review.

Just as soon as Hyde Park was reached and the men left to the tender mercies of Sergeant Whiston, "Sammy's" hobby re-asserted itself and setting the example, he soon had the unit's representatives sitting on the grass, surrounded by polishing outfits, cleaning every trace of tarnish and dust from buttons, belts and boots. The march through the Empire's capital commenced from the Park. From the wall of spectators, all the way from Hyde Park, past Buckingham Palace, around Australia House, cheery hails rang out, calling the recognized comrade by name; but in a parade such as this it was "Eyes front." At the conclusion of the eventful march, all the men, wearing smiles of infinite satisfaction, proceeded on leave; their last leave in Blighty. Before the men who were left behind in Bramshott could take their leave there were the attestation papers to be completed, the medical parade, clothing parade, pay parades to be held. Fortunately the unit's papers were in excellent shape before leaving Belgium; this materially hurried their completion prior to sailing. Many of the old boys who had been sent back wounded or sick at different times during the war, rejoined the unit to go home with it.

Papers completed and parades over, all but a "holding party" were sent on leave. They scattered to the four winds. How much had been built on that last leave. Homes were to be visited for the last time. Flirtations commenced on previous leaves were to be brought to a climax. The leave men had been absent five days and already practically every man had wired for extension (Acting G.C. being of the lenient type), when a wire came from Argyll House: "Have all men report back to camp by May 12th, sailing on 17th." The emergency called for a carefully worded telegram. What message would turn the trick? From some ingenious mind, over the wires throughout the three Islands ran the message: "Report to camp for the 12th. Sailing." That one word "sailing" worked magic. Not a man failed. Lieut.-Colonel Stanley Paulin, D.S.O., O.C. and Captain Chas. Kerr, M.C. made an early morning rush up to town, at the request of H. M. King George, to appear at Buckingham Palace.

In the early hours of the morning of May 19th, the unit again left Bramshott Camp, but this time on a much pleasanter mission and took train from Liphook to Southampton, where they embarked on the S.S. Aquatania. On exactly the same day, three years ago, the unit was aboard the S.S. Adriatic in Halifax, starting on its long journey to the Great War. How much had taken place in those three years.

With faces turned homewards, everyone was joyous. Yet the joy was not complete. Comrades were left over there in "Flanders Fields" who would never again see fair Canada. Then, too, many of the Officers had gone home with other units or singly. How much the unit would have enjoyed having aboard Lieut.-Colonel J. D. McQueen, the original O.C., Captains "Joe," "Andie," "Secord," and "Grantie" as well as dozens of the old boys. It so happened that Premier Borden was aboard returning to Canada from England. He had hoped to escape unobserved by taking a small boat

ashore at 6 a.m. As it ever was, so then, rumour got busy and scores of lusty throats cheered the Premier as he was rowed across the harbour in the early morning.

"D'ye think you'll ever get back" was a constantly teasing question "over there." But it was now a proven fact. The dear old land was under the foot once again. Smiles from those waiting on the quay sides were returned with interest. Yes, sure enough, it was Canada, but not yet the home town. Railway transport, however, was most sympathetic, there was little delay. In the train speeding westward there were hearts under those khaki tunics which literally bounced with sheer unadulterated joy; a goodly number of small strips of coloured ribbon lay coyly above those bouncing hearts. It was difficult to realize all at once, that within a few hours the men would be commencing life again as Canadian civilians. The Call of Duty had sent them away, and the same call would send them to take their places in the ranks of Canada's freemen, inspired always by the fact that they had at least "done their bit."

Toronto was the demobilization centre, and shortly after the men had stepped on the platform the last piece of routine was accomplished. The trains which were to take the boys going out of the city either east or west, were leaving in a couple of hours. There were hurried good-byes all round, promises were made to keep in touch with each other, addresses exchanged, waves of farewell across the groups and the universe seemed suddenly to crumble into very small pieces; old pals and comrades scattered like chaff in the wind; but of the tie that bound, and will bind them together, we cannot write.

